

# ALVARADO OPEN SPACE PARK MASTER PLAN





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	4
BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW.....	5
PLANNING PROCESS PART I: ESTABLISHING THE CONTEXT.....	6
SITE ANALYSIS.....	7-10
ENGAGE THE PUBLIC: PUBLIC EYE ON ALVARADO.....	11
ENGAGE THE PUBLIC: ON-SITE FIELD DAY.....	12
ENGAGE THE PUBLIC: KEY STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS.....	13
PLANNING PROCESS PART II: FORMULATE THE PLAN.....	14
A VISION FOR ALVARADO.....	15
MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES.....	16
PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES.....	17-26
DESIGN CONCEPTS: OVERARCHING DESIGN FOUNDATION.....	27
CONCEPT #1: THE CENTRAL HUB.....	28
CENTRAL HUB: HIGHLIGHTS.....	29
CONCEPT #2: BOTANIC EXPERIENCE.....	30
BOTANIC EXPERIENCE: HIGHLIGHTS.....	31
SHARED ENHANCEMENTS.....	32-33
CONCEPT COMPARISON.....	34
PLANNING PROCESS PART III: RESOURCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	35
COST ESTIMATES.....	36
CONSULTANT RECOMMENDATIONS: MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE.....	37
RECOMMENDED PHASING PRIORITIES.....	38-39
RECOMMENDED CONCEPT.....	40



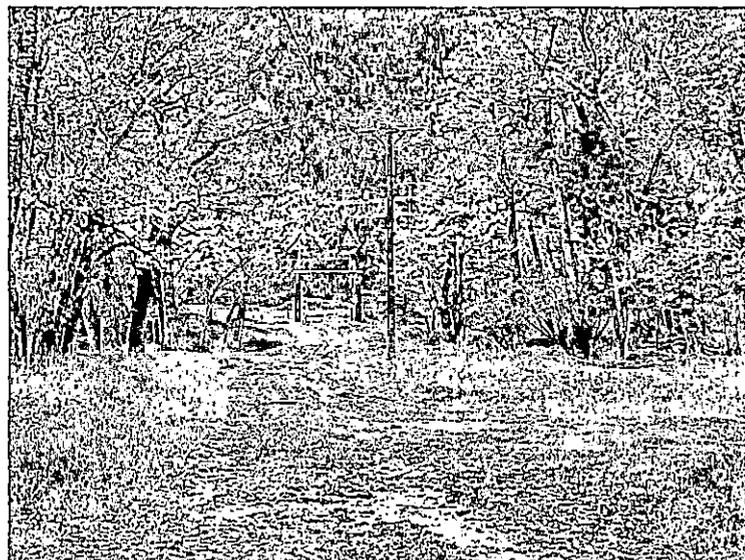
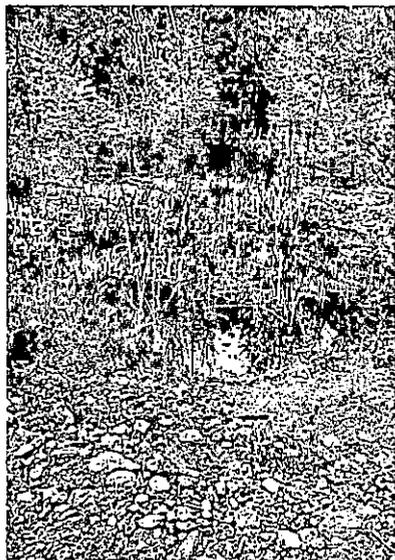


# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Amy Saxton, Strategic & Community Planning Division Director, and Martha Tableman, Open Space Coordinator, for selecting THK Associates to develop Clear Creek County's Alvarado Open Space Master Plan. We thank them for their direction, coordination, organization, and introduction to several stakeholders. These stakeholders, who we also thank for their time, thought, and insights, include The Open Space Commission (OSC), The Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), The Public Information Officer (PIO, Megan Hiler), and multiple community groups. We thank County Archivist Alexis Ehrgott who sifted through historical records and communications to relay the history of these land parcels to us. We express our gratitude to the following community groups and individuals:

- Kay Axtell, Member, SOLVE and OSC; Critical proponent of the OSC's founding
- Lynn Caligliuri, Executive Director, Mountain Area Land Trust
- Mark Cuccinella, Clear Creek Radio host & Community member
- Margi Kaspari, Friends of Clear Creek
- Rose Morris, Manager, Clear Creek County's Mountain Youth Network
- Beth Luther, Assistant to Clear Creek County Manager
- Cameron Marlin, General Manager, Clear Creek Metropolitan Recreation District
- Luci Perez, Youth Programs Coordinator, Clear Creek County's Mountain Youth Network
- Becky Pierce, Wetland Program Manager, CDOT
- Friends of Clear Creek

We thank all respondents of the Eye on Alvarado survey, as well as the community members who attended our on-site field day to engage with our Project Team and communicate their desires and concerns.





ACCEPTED, this 15th day of April, 2025, at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Clear Creek County Board of County Commissioners.

*George Marlin*  
George Marlin, Chair

*Rebecca Lloyd*  
Rebecca Lloyd, Commissioner

*Jodie Hartman-Ball*  
Jodie Hartman-Ball, Commissioner

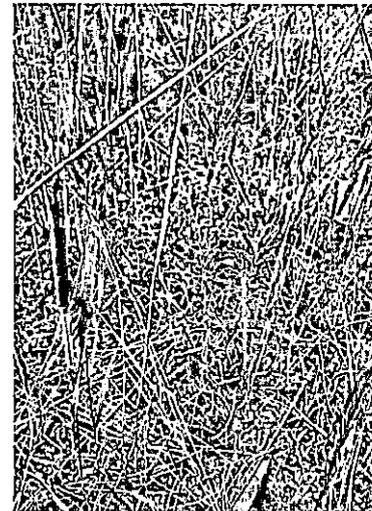
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Alvarado Master Plan project began in earnest in the fall of 2023 with a community engagement project called Public Eye on Alvarado. But protection, preservation and enjoyment of this beloved stretch of cottonwood forest, know as Alvarado Open Space Park have been a priority of Clear Creek County and the Open Space Commission for many years.

Spanning 13 acres, at nearly 8000 feet of elevation, Alvarado Open Space Park is "a hidden gem" within Clear Creek County. It is one of the few destinations in the County with only minor grade changes, solidifying it as a prime spot for locals of all abilities to relax and/or hike with or without their canine companions, and enjoy Clear Creek and the small central pond. The Park consists of an impressive matrix of ecosystem types, ranging from interior grassland, to deciduous and evergreen forests, meadows, and riparian woodlands. The County purchased the land in 2015, transitioning it from an events venue to an Open Space Park. The Park has become increasingly popular. With increased usage, there are opportunities to evaluate the Park and the activities and experiences it fosters to determine what it should be and what, with some investment towards preservation and programming, it will offer the residents of Clear Creek County.

The Master Planning Process was kicked off by the Public Eye on Alvarado survey, posted to the Clear Creek Forum from April 23rd, 2020 to October 4th, 2023. Its 180 responses provided useful background for continued outreach and conceptual design. The THK Team attended two meetings – one with the one with the Board of County Commissioners and the other with the Open Space Commission – to display and collect feedback on our design concepts. To team also convened an On-Site Field Day in October, 2024 to relay design concepts, contextual findings, and hear the community's suggestions and responses.

In addition to stakeholder feedback, the Consultant Team assessed existing site conditions in situ, as well as through existing data and GIS layers from state agencies. They examined site circulation, ecology (i.e. flora and fauna), and landmarks. Assessments support that the Park is a mosaic of interacting ecosystems with ecologically diverse and rich inhabitant assemblages, bolstered by neighboring highly vegetated, creek-fed, parcels managed by CDOT. The public illuminated the site's popularity for walking and fishing, highlighting the need to designate and refine the trail system to focus human impacts and relieve the vast majority of the space from these direct pressures.



## Project Vision & Objectives

By interpreting the existing conditions alongside initial community feedback, we formulated a project vision for the open space and objectives to achieve that vision.

### Vision for the Park:

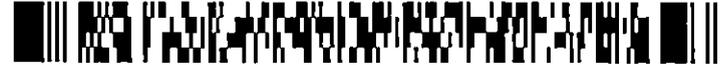
To sustain the existing natural character of Alvarado Open Space Park for the people of Clear Creek County to enjoy passively or actively; socially or solitarily; while augmenting safety, accessibility, leisure opportunities, and educational experiences, all of which will cumulatively protect and preserve the Park's charm and value. We envision a park that can be enjoyed by all community members, regardless of abilities, for anything from day-long outings to quick lunch hikes or picnics, and everything in between.

Four project values expand upon this Vision: Safety, Preservation, Accessibility, and Inclusivity & Community Engagement.

**Objectives for the Project:** Restoration and Preservation, Community Pride and Identity, and Controlled Creek Access.

The Vision is The Team's long-term goal for what they want this park to be and how it should serve the community. The Project Objectives guide the project and Vision, and are specific desired outcomes for the plan.

The community and context inform the Vision and Objectives, which then shape the proposed design concepts. Finally, Consultant Recommendations furnish a potpourri of management and maintenance tasks/schedules and phasing priority resources.



# BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW

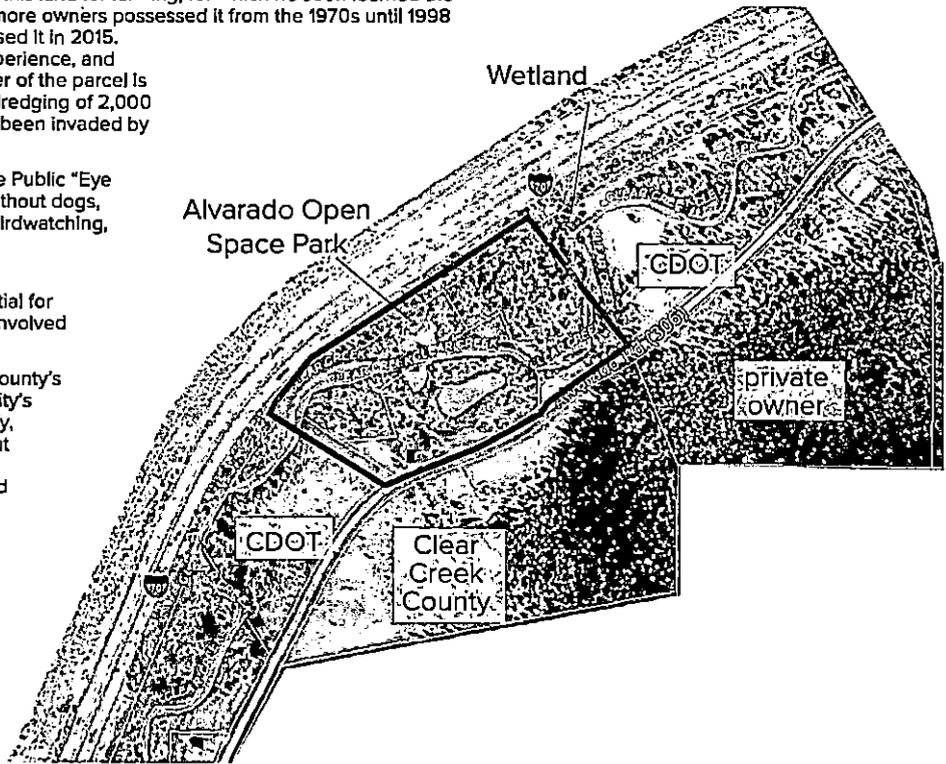
According to the USDA, Alvarado Open Space consists of and/or lays adjacent to a complex mosaic of at least 50 unique Rocky Mountain ecosystem vegetation types across 13 acres. This parcel includes the following main ecosystems: Southern Rocky Mountain Ponderosa Pine Woodland, Rocky Mountain Lower Montane-Foothill Riparian Woodland, and Interior Western North American Temperate Ruderal Grassland. Moreover, because this parcel of land serves as a wildlife corridor and buffer between developed and less-developed zones, conservation efforts on-site will positively impact the entire mosaic of interacting ecosystems and ecologies, particularly the organisms migrating throughout it. Similarly, sensitivity to the ecosystems will benefit the entire watershed.

In addition to ecosystem services, the structures in Alvarado Open Space Park are relics from the 1800s, with some uncertainty backing their history. The site was likely used by George Andrew Jackson, who came from Missouri to discover gold in Colorado. What was to become Alvarado Open Space was federal government land until 1930s when Arthur Harbeck purchased (and patented) it. Harbeck initially tried to use this land for farming, for which he soon learned the soil was not equipped. The land changed ownership a few times until it was foreclosed in the 1970s. A few more owners possessed it from the 1970s until 1998 (Joel Syssel). Syssel turned the site into "Shadows Ranch," an events venue operating until the County purchased it in 2015. As a result, some trash and debris have accumulated and will require removal in order to improve views, experience, and ecosystem services. The pond was constructed sometime between 1957 and 1967. Near the northeast corner of the parcel is a demonstration wetland spanning a section of the Open Space as well at adjacent CDOT land. It required dredging of 2,000 cubic yards of sand and cobble in 2011. Unfortunately, like much of the freshwater wetlands in the US, it has been invaded by Phragmites.

Presently, the Open Space Park supports active and passive activities alike, as indicated by analysis from the Public "Eye on Alvarado" survey (expanded upon below). Visitors primarily use the space for hiking or running with or without dogs, snowshoeing or skiing, floating, swimming, and paddle boarding. Popular passive activities on-site include birdwatching, nature photography, and fishing.

Additionally, wooded parcels neighboring Alvarado Open Space Park belong to Colorado Department of Transportation, and the large parcel across the street belongs to Clear Creek County. To enhance the potential for connectivity – for visitors as well as wildlife – it is crucial that our Master Plan indicate the ways in which all involved entities can cooperate.

Alongside visual assessments and observations, historical research, and ecological analyses, Clear Creek County's "Public Eye on Alvarado" survey was an instrumental facet for planning. This survey addressed the community's desires and concerns for this open space, which all revolved around a theme of "deliberateness." Specifically, respondents desired that the small Park's "hidden gem" charm and "accessible" nature be sustained, without attracting too large of a crowd. Desired improvements include THK's public engagement efforts include an on-site field day (pictured below) to discuss design considerations and Concepts, and request feedback and guidance from the stakeholders.



# PLANNING PROCESS PART I: ESTABLISHING THE CONTEXT

About the Planning Process: The Project Team, which consisted of County staff and the Consultants, engaged in a three-step process. Step I was to establish the context. First the Consultant team assessed the geographic, physical, environmental, and ecological characteristics in Site Analyses. Then the team Engaged the Public to evaluate public and stakeholder input, ensuring the community perspective was a facet of the planning. Step 2 was Formulating the Plan, and then in the final step, consultants revealed their recommendations alongside phasing resources.

## PART II: FORMULATE THE PLAN

## PART III: RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOURCES

### PART I: ESTABLISH CONTEXT

#### 1. SITE ANALYSIS & CONTEXT

Site Visits; Existing Conditions Observations  
GIS analysis  
Archive Research  
Ecological Assessments

#### 2. ENGAGE THE PUBLIC

Stakeholders, members of the public: Eye on Alvarado  
Stakeholders, County Officials: BOCC and OSC  
Stakeholders, all: On-Site Field Day

#### 3. ESTABLISH A VISION

What the Park will be

Community Feedback & Survey Responses  
Ecological & Environmental Conditions & Constraints  
Site Opportunities

#### 4. DISTILL OBJECTIVES

What the Plan project will do

#### 5. IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FROM CHALLENGES AND STRENGTHS

#### 6. DESIGN SITE IMPROVEMENT CONCEPTS

#### 7. CONSULTANT RECOMMENDATIONS





# SITE ANALYSIS: AN ECOLOGICAL SNAPSHOT

Diverse ecosystems and low human development have allowed a variety of organisms to establish and/or use Alvarado Open Space for resources and homes, according to CPW. Here is a small sampling of some organisms you might see or hear on-site.



## Birds



All About Birds



A Birding Naturalist

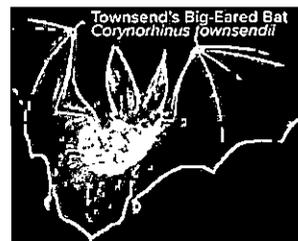


Cornell Ornithology



All About Birds

## Bats



Bat Week



National Geographic



Bat Conservation International



Fleethed Audubon Society

## Small Mammals



Animal Diversity Web



iNaturalist

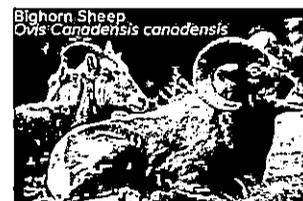


Pacific Forest Trust

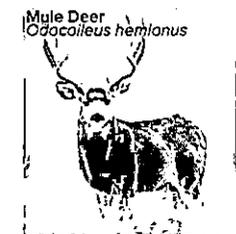
## Large Mammals



Canva



Vail Daily



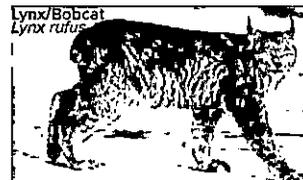
Jared Lloyd



Daniel Gaura



Post Independent

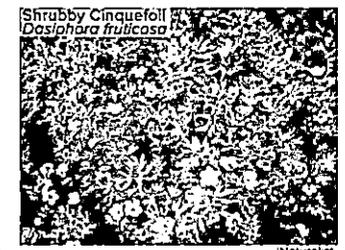


TNC

## Flowering Perennials



Colorado Hardy Plants



iNaturalist



Wyoming Dept. of Health

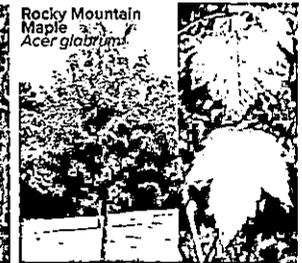


Southwest Desert Flora

## Deciduous Trees



WNMU

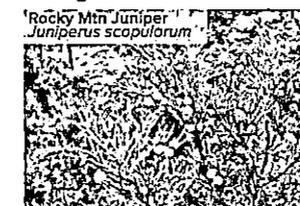


Polyplaid

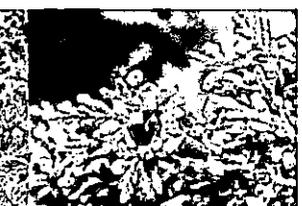
Bower & Birch

Schmidt & Sons

## Evergreens



Gardenia

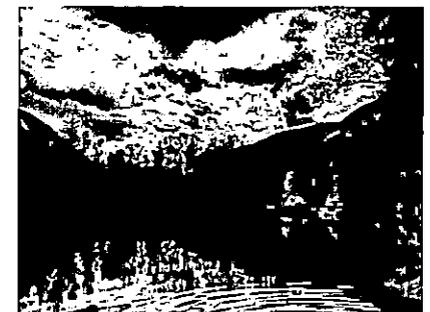


Gymnosperm Database



# SITE ANALYSIS: EXISTING CONDITIONS

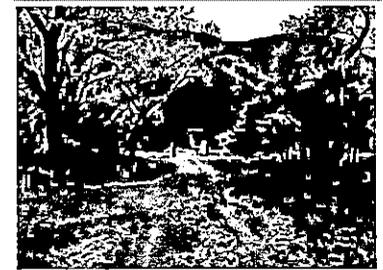
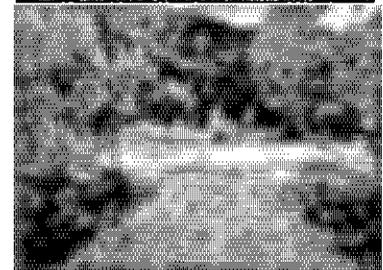
Remnants of the former Event Facility are visible on site. Initial surveys of the site revealed the features indicated below. Existing, historical structures present risks of asbestos. Both bridges are stable, but not ADA-compliant, indicating that additional safety measures should be implemented.





# SITE ANALYSIS: CIRCULATION

Several trails circle the pond and wind around the south side of the creek, linking with the bridges. Based on observations, and ground compaction, we assessed site circulation patterns. We found a hierarchy of routes, with the primary route (orange) appearing the most accessible. The site lacks a central hub, planned traffic pattern or features that direct traffic towards already-disturbed trails, and away from more vegetated, intact areas.



Circulation Routes	
— — —	Primary
- - - -	Secondary
- - -	Tertiary



# ENGAGE THE PUBLIC: PUBLIC EYE ON ALVARADO

Strategic and Community Planning Director Amy Saxton and Open Space Coordinator Martha Tableman posted a survey to the Clear Creek Forum from April 23rd, 2020 to October 4th, 2023. 180 respondents completed the survey, the majority of whom had visited the Park on two to more than ten occasions. The most common use is walking/hiking/running (with and without dogs). Less common, but still notable, uses of the space include photography, birdwatching, floating, swimming, and fishing. Many comments note a desire for minimal development and disincentivizing large crowds, a challenge to which myriad nearby trails have succumbed.

Key insights from the Public Eye on Alvarado:

1. The Park is important to the community
2. The Park is perceived as a hidden gem
3. Improvements should not change the character of the park

## Themes & Motifs



Font size and boldness broadly indicate frequency of theme or motif in survey responses; i.e. larger words note a comment that was repeated with maximum frequency.

## Current Uses



## Desired Amenities and Expansions





# ENGAGE THE PUBLIC: ON-SITE FIELD DAY

Key Insights from the On-site Field Day mimicked those of the Public Eye on Alvarado:

1. The community wants the Park to prioritize it over visitors/tourists.
2. There are ample opportunities to engage the public in site care, such as planting beds, and associate it more closely with educational events and curricula in the County.
3. Management must be incorporated in the Master Plan.



## ALVARADO OPEN SPACE ON SITE ENGAGEMENT DAY!

**ALVARADO OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN**  
Come join us for a day in Alvarado Open Space Park to share your thoughts on the qualities that make this place special and meaningful to you!

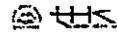
We want to hear what you would like to see at Alvarado Open Space Park in the future!

With your input, Alvarado Open Space Park has the opportunity to be what the community most wants!



**PLEASE BRING SUNSCREEN, WATER, AND ANY OTHER ITEMS YOU MAY USE WHEN ENJOYING THE OUTDOORS!**

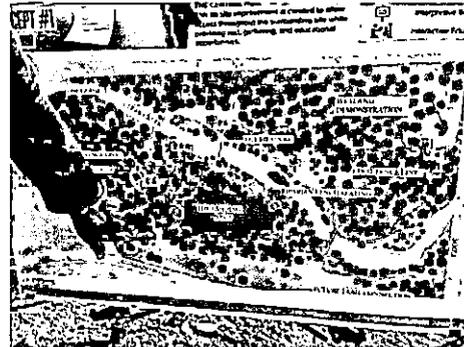
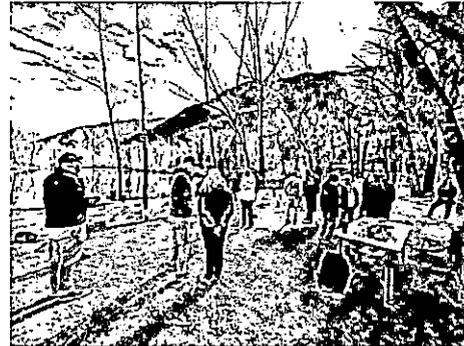
**WHERE:** Alvarado Open Space Park, Georgetown, CD  
**WHEN:** October 17th, 10:00am  
**WHO:** YOU! The community members who enjoy the open outdoors, the THK Design Team who is helping to facilitate the master-plan development and members of the Open Space Commission.  
**WHAT:** A chance to explore Alvarado Open Space & Contribute to the future design of the space!



We invited the community to an on-site Field Day for Alvarado on October 17th, 2024, primarily via targeted emails. The purpose of the event was to share our design concepts and elicit feedback on them.

Directed by Amy Saxton and Martha Tableman, we emailed the flier at the left to several community organizations, partners, and government employees, including PIO Megan Hiler who broadcasted the event more widely through County channels.

The general sentiments from the 30 or so attendants echoed the findings of the Eye on Alvarado survey: residents expressed that no major construction should occur on-site, given the rustic, yet accessible character of the Open Space Park. Additionally, they mentioned ideas like charging non-residents for hiking and fishing use. The underlying notion of such fees is to mitigate the likelihood of this Park becoming a major tourist attraction the way so many others have in Georgetown and the County. Residents like that the Park presently supports visitors of all physical abilities. They enjoy walking their dogs on its trails, but do not enjoy the lack of pet waste disposal options.

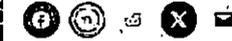


Chris Koeberl, Clear Creek Courant

## Clear Creek County wants local input for Alvarado Open Space Park

The open space has been a county assist since 2019; now the county wants to know what the community wants to get out of it

by Chris Koeberl  
October 23, 2024



Pond at Alvarado Open Space in Clear Creek County Oct. 17. Credit: Chris Koeberl



## ENGAGE THE PUBLIC: KEY STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Throughout the process of developing the Alvarado Open Space Park Master Plan, the Team engaged with stakeholder groups to provide updates and receive feedback. Two main groups, the Open Space Commission (OSC), and the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) were the primary stakeholders. Working with them, the Team refined the master plan through the iterative process of design, while incorporating site and region specific constraints and preferences.

Some of these include the overarching vision, goals, and programmatic elements that would drive future design considerations. Insight into local organizations and users that would have an impact on the site or be impacted by the site, as well as specific uses for areas around the site as it pertained to these user groups.



### *Open Space Commission (OSC)*

During the process of master planning for Alvarado Open Space Park, The Team presented and work-shopped with the Open Space Commission on two separate occasions.

The first meeting was an open session on September 11th, 2024. At this session, The Team detailed the resident engagement collection process and the overall direction of the master plan.

The OSC knowledge of the local needs for the space and additional input on desired design features to include on site amounted to valuable feedback.

The second meeting with the Open Space Commission was held on November 4th, 2024, during a special session to review the overall structure and status of the planning process of the master plan. The OSC voiced valuable insights that The planning Team employed to refine the Master Plan document as well as its tone and language. The OSC also encouraged The planning team to consider how this project could align coherently with future projects to comprehensively benefit outdoor experiences for all residents.

### *Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)*

The Team attended one of The Board of County Commissioners' twice-monthly meetings, during which this administrators evaluate a variety of projects and policies within their jurisdiction for Clear Creek County.

The master planning Team attended a BOCC meeting on September 17th, 2024 to present an update on the Plan. At the meeting, The Team discussed and showed the current design directions. The BOCC offered feedback regarding how the current designs would impact the open space.

The Board of County Commissioners is comprised of local residents, who thoughtfully predicted and noted how their communities utilize the space, and what opportunities and features on site would be beneficial to the local organizations, educational entities, and the individuals that visit the site. The BOCC offered critical guidance in terms of additional stakeholders to incorporate, and design avenues to explore.

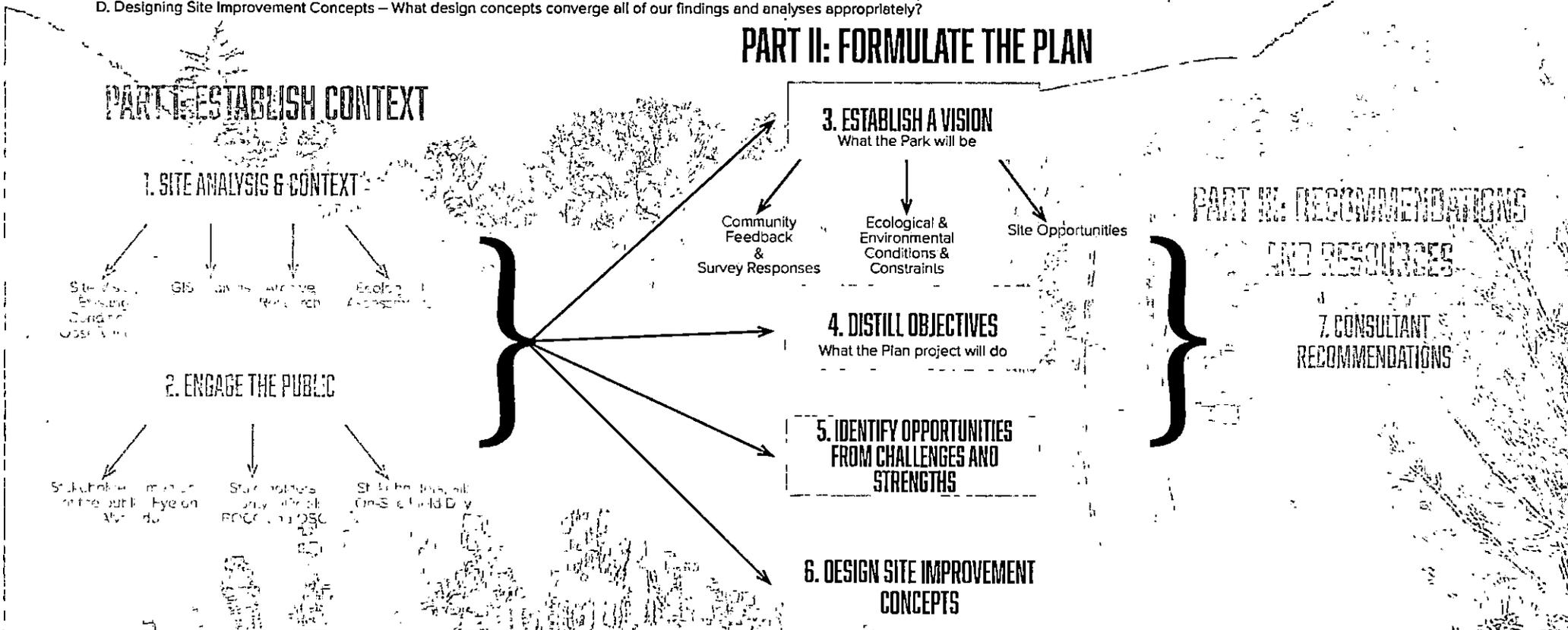


# PLANNING PROCESS PART II: FORMULATE THE PLAN

Part II of the Planning process was to employ the established context, insights, and analyses to Formulate the Plan. Building the Plan means creating a clear vision for what the park should be like. It also means establishing the objectives of this Master Plan Project. What must the Master Plan do? What are the goals? The Planning Process must also identify opportunities for innovation and meeting goals. And finally, it should coalesce in Design Concepts (see Part III).

The steps to formulating the plan involve:

- A. Establishing a Park Vision – What do we want Alvarado Open Space to be? What should it be like?
- B. Distilling Project Objectives – What do we want to accomplish with the Project?
- C. Identifying Opportunities from Challenges and Strengths – What opportunities and restrictions do the conditions of this park create?
- D. Designing Site Improvement Concepts – What design concepts converge all of our findings and analyses appropriately?





# A VISION FOR ALVARADO

## VISION STATEMENT

To sustain the existing natural character of Alvarado Open Space Park for the people of Clear Creek County to enjoy passively or actively; socially or solitarily; while augmenting safety, accessibility, leisure opportunities, and educational experiences, all of which will cumulatively protect and preserve the Park's charm and value. We envision a park that can be enjoyed by all community members, regardless of abilities, for anything from day long outings to quick lunch hikes or picnics, and everything in between.

### 1. SAFETY

Site safety encompasses various elements, including creek bank stability and unobstructed views for monitoring children using the park's features. With this fine lens on the site, the Master Plan offers updates that enhance safety while minimizing impacts into surrounding habitats. Designated gathering hubs and universal access to the pond and creek will foster experiences that are safer for the integrity of the ecosystems as well as their visitors.

### 2. PRESERVATION

Alvarado Open Space Park's reputation as a "Hidden Gem" stems from its tranquil, immersive nature. Such sentiments have been specifically ascribed to the pond and creek. Based on its popularity and ecological capacity, The Master Plan advocates for the protection of the Park, focusing on low-impact enhancements, such as re-vegetation in areas where trails widen unnecessarily, and installing boulders on the stream-bank to limit erosion while offering visually identifiable designated entry points for visitors.

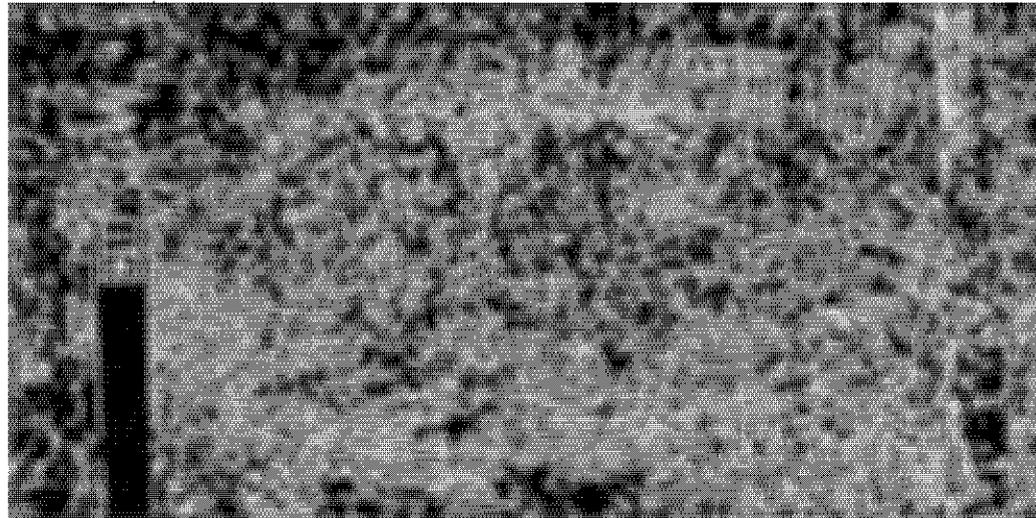
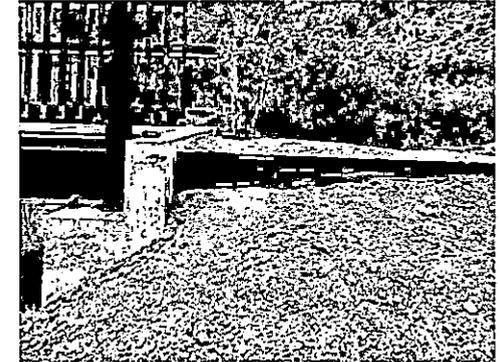
### 3. ACCESSIBILITY

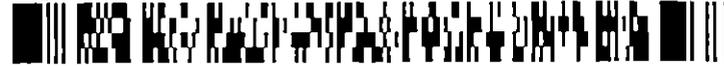
It is essential that the valuable experiences the site offers be accessible for all users. The Master Plan provides guidelines for enhancing site traversal, improving bridge ramps, and adding wayfinding, with amenities like inclusive safety and educational signage. Such signage should display educational information in a variety of formats (e.g. Braille, tactile, visual, ASL, English, Spanish) to engage visitors of differing backgrounds and ages. Collaborating with local botanical and accessibility organizations to create a welcoming environment will ensure that all visitors have an enjoyable and memorable experience.

### 4. INCLUSIVITY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As a public park, it is critical that the improved space genuinely encapsulate community desires in a diplomatic manner. Through an online survey, public Field Day, and public meetings, we can aggregate, interpret, and prioritize variety of sentiments.

To accomplish that vision, the project team conducted a thorough site analysis and in-depth public engagement, the Master Plan for Alvarado Open Space Park focuses on three key concepts: safety, preservation, and accessibility. The primary locations of focus are along the Alvarado Road side of Clear Creek, which presents opportunities for improvements aligning with the three key concepts. On the opposite side of Clear Creek, the priorities are preservation and accessibility. Maintaining the existing trail and removing hazards, as well as general cleaning and trash disposal, we can help preserve the vegetated habitat between the creek and I-70. Four key Values that facilitate this Vision are detailed below.





# MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES

Building on the Vision and Values, The Alvarado Open Space Park Master Plan project aims to establish guiding principles for safety updates, re-vegetation opportunities, accessibility standards, and programming initiatives at a conceptual level. By prioritizing these concepts, the Master Plan informs the implementation of updates and integrates community feedback to shape future efforts. Grounded in stakeholder insights and input from governing entities, this plan presents key information regarding the site's future. The project started with some community goals provided via the Public Eye on Alvarado event and survey from 2023. Based on the priorities established in that stage and the discussions so far in the current project, the project team developed two concepts, both of which accomplish the following project objectives:

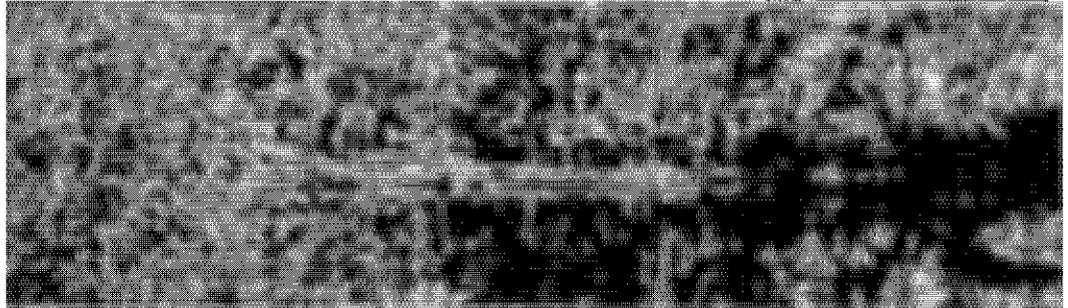
## OBJECTIVE 1: RESTORATION AND PRESERVATION

The community valued the rustic charm and relative natural state of the grounds at Alvarado and wanted to ensure its character was preserved. The wooded site contains numerous artifacts from its previous land use as an event center. As Alvarado Open Space Park occupies former private land, the several remaining infrastructure and structural elements should be demolished and replaced with vegetative habitat to revitalize the habitat and natural elements of the space. Once the site returns to a more natural state, future restoration efforts can focus on specific elements such as riparian re-vegetation, erosion control, and thematic programming.



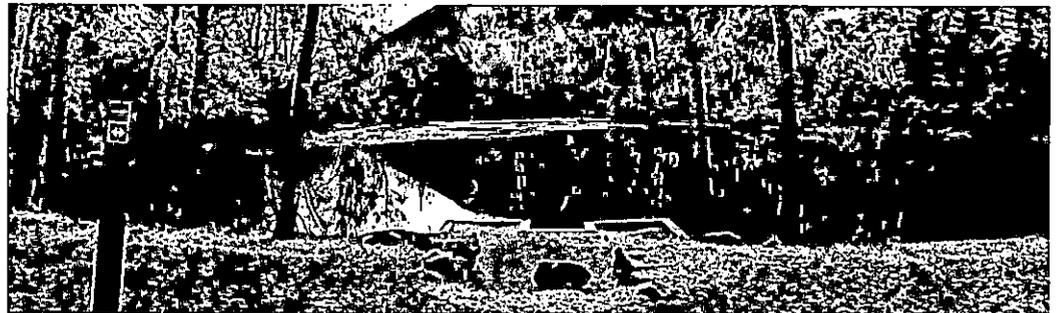
## OBJECTIVE 2: COMMUNITY PRIDE AND IDENTITY

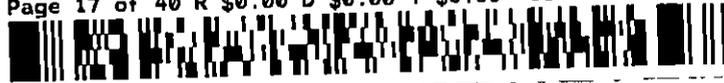
Alvarado Open Space Park is regarded as a "hidden gem" by locals. Its proximity to Georgetown, Empire and Idaho Springs makes it a favorite spot for residents seeking a quiet place to connect with nature. The park's relatively compact size suggests that it is an ideal location for smaller, local groups for recreational and educational activities, sentiments that the Master Plan echoes. The design approach of the park should include elements meant to enhance this type of use versus inviting new uses like events or festivals, and should not aim to expand use of this small space.



## OBJECTIVE 3: CONTROLLED CREEK ACCESS

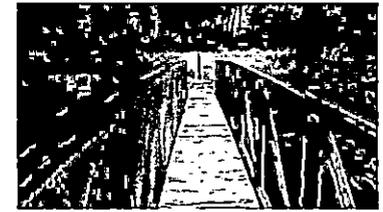
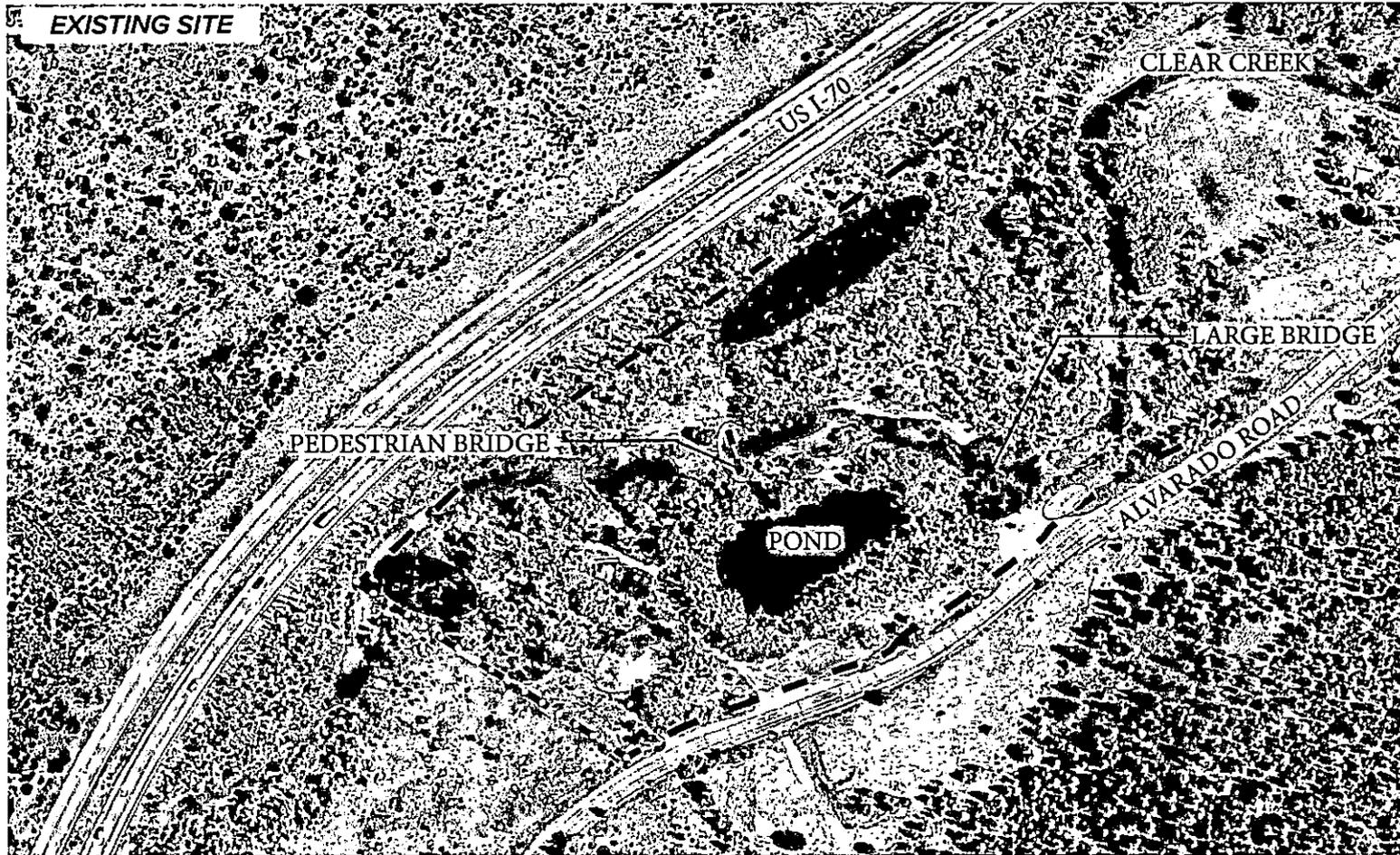
Alvarado Open Space Park is bisected by Clear Creek, which is a significant aesthetic and ecological asset. Ensuring safe, defined access points for all visitors is crucial for preserving this aquatic amenity. Educating users about the riparian habitat is a critical step in ensuring it will thrive for years to come with a local user base who is invested in seeing the site's success. The prominence of the creek as a park feature means an opportunity and an obligation to create design solutions for safe defined access points for viewing and protecting the creek.





# PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES: THEMATIC FOCI

ADA/Accessibility, Riparian Experiences, and Landscape Hazards are three categories of interventions, created from the Visions, Values, and Objectives. Building these themes into the Plan will modernize this hidden gem into an inclusive landmark, while also emphasizing its celebrated character.



Themes

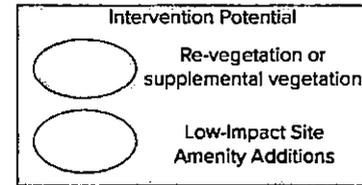
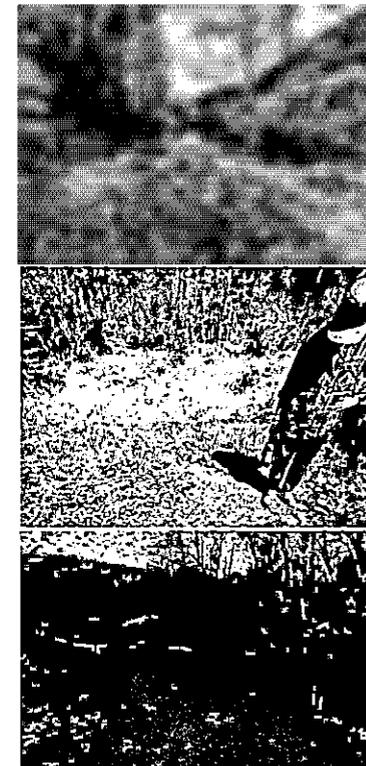
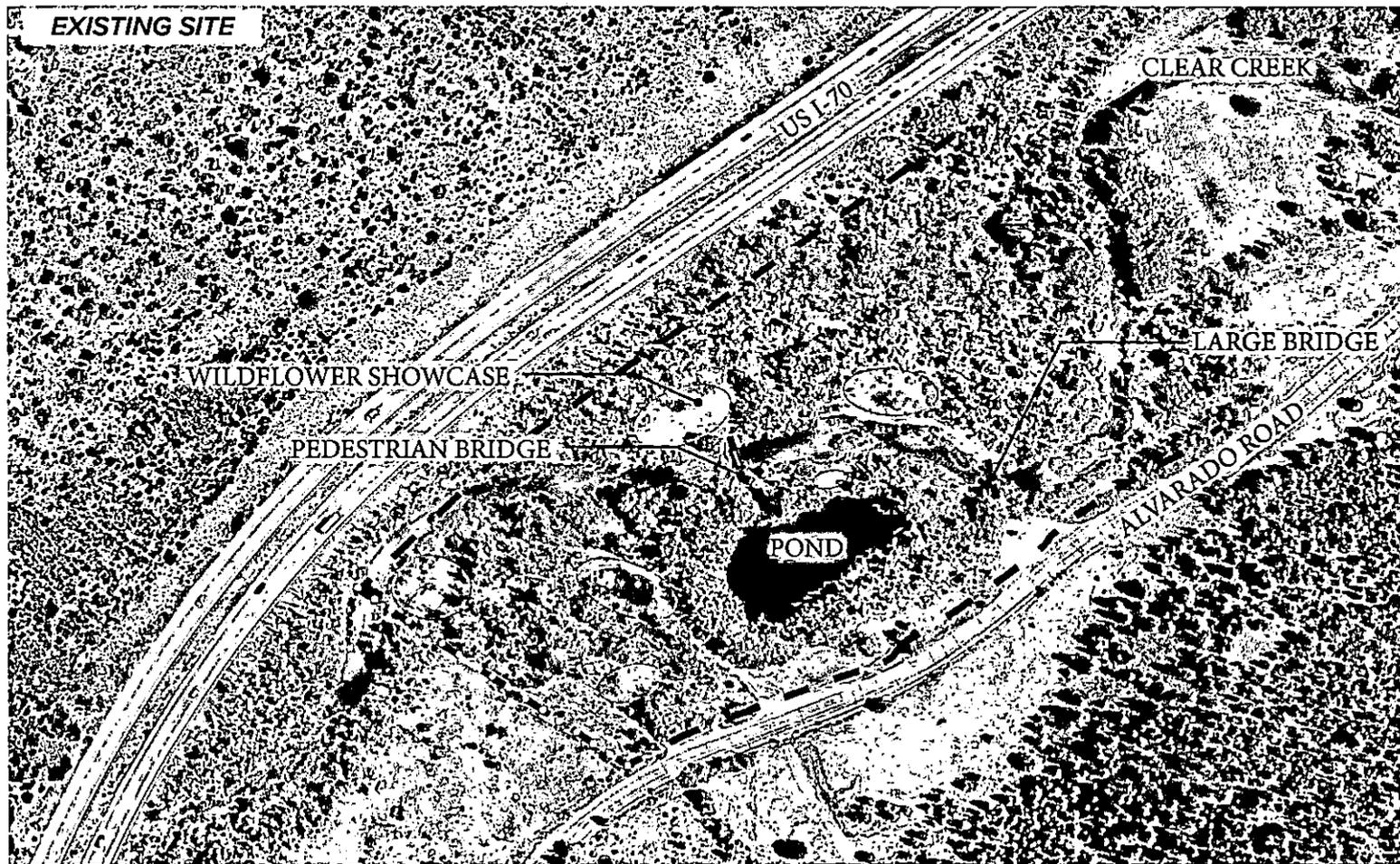
-  ADA/Accessibility
-  Riparian Experiences
-  Landscape Hazards



# PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES: INTERVENTION POTENTIAL

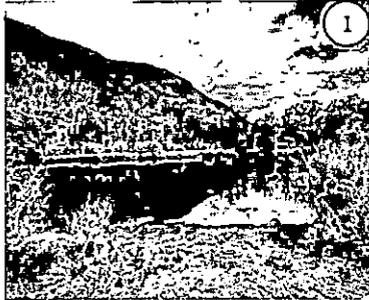
While Thematic Foci are represented spatially, they still remain conceptual. To address this gap between Conceptual and Action Items, the graphic below adds another layer of detail to indicate where two intervention categories can appropriately be implemented at the Park.

These Interventions can address zones that have become devoid of vegetation as a result of past and continued use (e.g. trampling). Other impacted areas can serve as zones for public engagement and education with just a few small changes (like adding signage and benches).

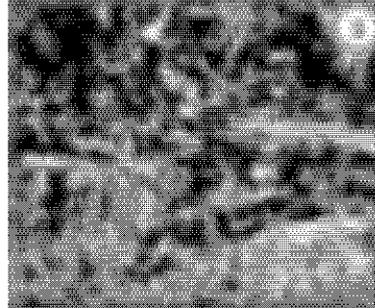




# PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES: MINOR CHANGES



Define pond access.



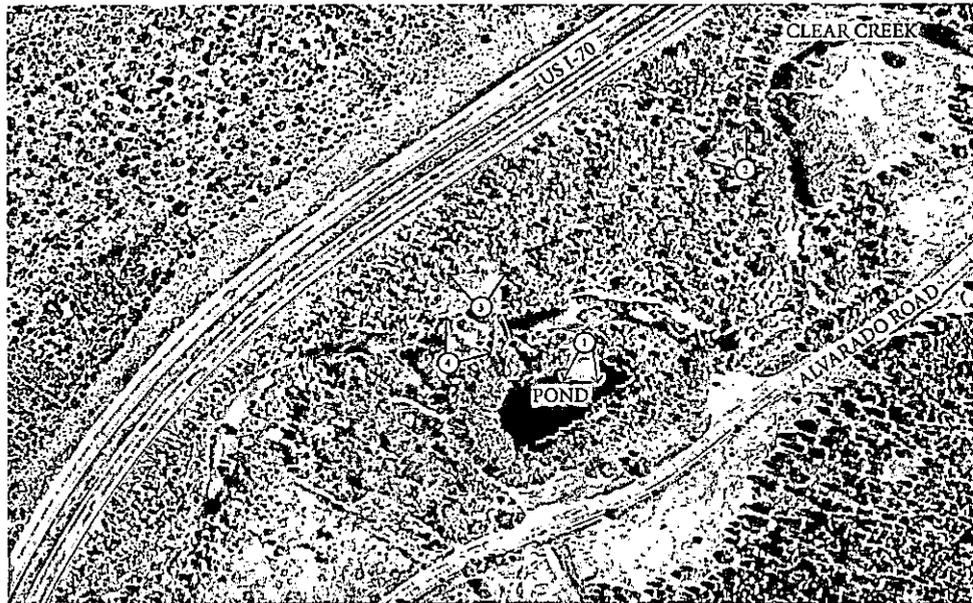
Re-vegetate to define trails and nourish the ecosystem, fostering educational opportunities.



Install more informative signage, particularly at the gateway to the more naturalized space(s).



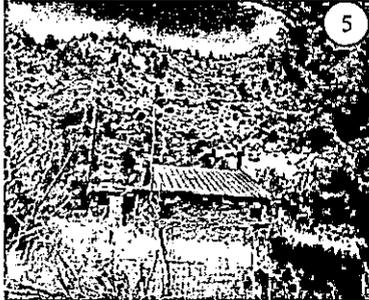
Define access to, and education on the Creek. Install boulders to stabilize shoreline.



Adding an additional layer of detail to the Intervention Potential graphic, these four spots at Alvarado Open Space Park elucidate a range of low-impact intervention opportunities, including re-vegetation and boulder-lining the pond bank, to more appropriately delineate access and non-access points. These four opportunities tie back to the Vision: by intensifying access to the water (controlled creek access) and trails in designated zones, preservation can occur deliberately elsewhere. Re-vegetation and shoreline/bank stabilization are key components of preservation. With thoughtful designation of trails and water access points, community pride and identity can blossom.



# PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES: GENERAL SITE CONDITIONS



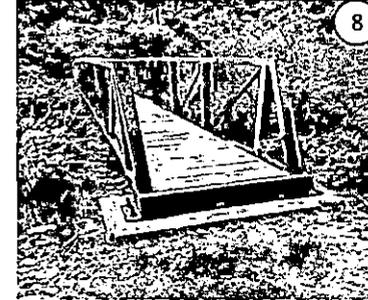
Existing structures, such as derelict buildings, can be demolished to obviate maintenance burdens and create space for re-vegetation and gathering.



Existing structures, such as waterside platforms, can be retrofitted into accessible water access points.



Parking should be concentrated to improve entrance vista and focus disruptive ecological impacts.



Existing structures, such as bridges, should be retrofitted to more closely align with ADA standards. Where funding is limited, informative signage should indicate the conditions.



Updating and amending structures, as well as remedying vegetative overgrowth in the parking lot, will be paramount in simultaneously improving accessibility and ecosystem integrity, aspects of **preservation and restoration**. Enhancing accessibility on-site will contribute to **community pride and identity**. Streamlining trails and parking is a facet of our Vision of controlled creek access.

Reestablishing the intended parking lot is a notable obstacle. Presently, visitors park along the street, which presents safety and accessibility hazards. The intended parking lot (see 7, above) is overgrown and thus underutilized. Its topography is an advantage for scenic views down to the pond to its northeast, presenting the challenge of balancing the need for parking with the desire for scenic views along the trails (instead of from the parking lot).

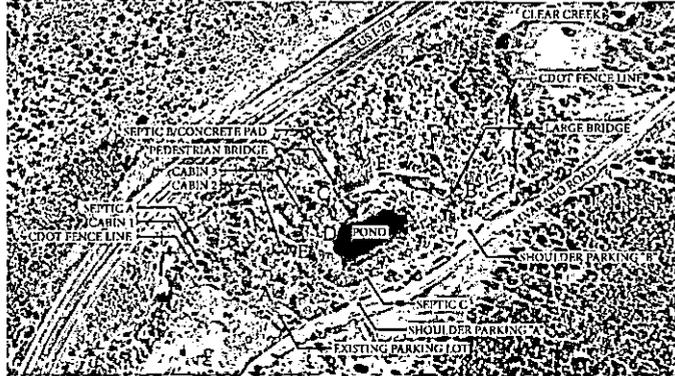


# PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES: EXPANDED ACCESSIBILITY

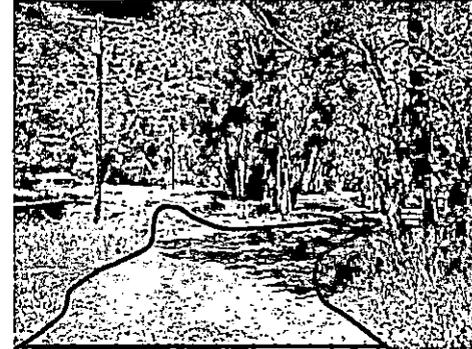


Accessibility is a Master Plan Vision Value that can be realized by making this Space inclusive and community-oriented. This space is one of the few relatively flat spaces in the county for walking while viewing the creek and enjoying nature. The opportunity to expand access is a high priority. Some opportunities for expanding access are explored below.

## CURRENT CONDITIONS



### A. Add ADA-compliant crushed gravel



At the current entrance to the site, the drive lane utilized by the trails crew and the porta-toilet company, the native grass has been slowly deteriorated, these spaces can be re-vegetated as the drive lane will no longer be in use at the current frequency.

### B. Smooth/level entry to bridge for enhanced traversing by grading and constructing ramps where possible and necessary.

- ADA Bridges**

  - min 60" tread width for bridges over ravines
  - Consider passing spaces every 200'

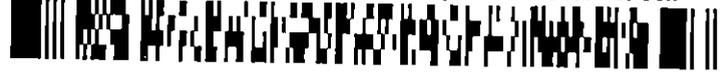
**ADA Obstacles**

  - Trail obstacles must not exceed 2" in height



### C. Install signage indicating that width of tread on second bridge is not ADA-compliant, rerouting traffic towards the more ADA-friendly bridge (on left)



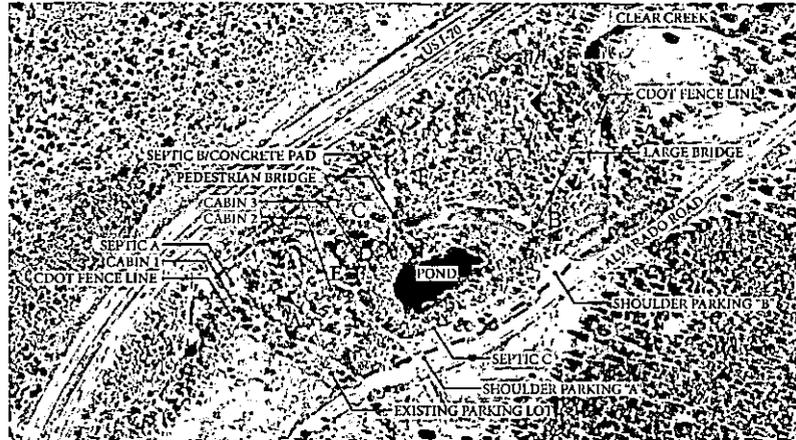


# PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES: ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

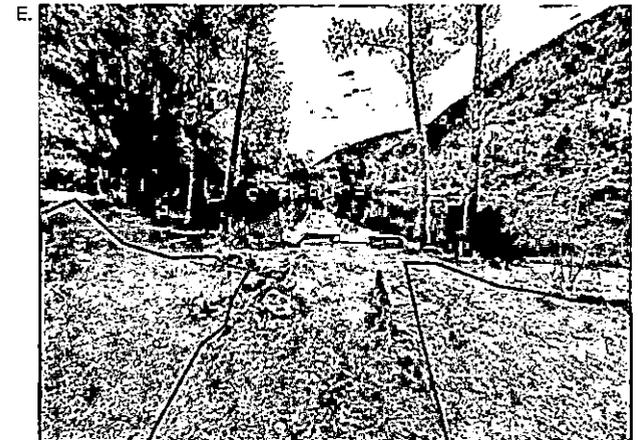


Current Conditions indicate several zones where unmanaged use has resulted in wear and tear that warrants ecological enhancements, especially in terms of the pond bank and trails design, both of which focused use. Focused use could relieve larger swaths of land from human impacts, intensifying them only in designated areas.

## CURRENT CONDITIONS



D. Willow stakes, rip rap, boulders, etc. could protect against further/future stream bank erosion, and offer aquatic exploration.



F. Re-vegetate cleared spaces and designate paths, using signage to discourage traffic on restoration sites, and ensuring at least 36" of trail/tread width.

### ADA Tread Width

- Ensure at least 36" of trail/tread width
- Where tread is less than 60" wide, passing spaces must be provided at intervals of at least 1000'

### ADA Passing Spaces

- Where the full length of a trail does not fully comply with the trail technical requirements, a passing space must be located at the end of the trail segment that complies fully with the technical requirements. Such a space enables people who use mobility devices to turn around and proceed back to where they started
- Consider ways to alert people using mobility devices when a passing space provides the last opportunity on a trail to turn around (this may not always be apparent). Printed materials, Web sites, trail head info/wayfinding signs, and signage at the end of the trail segment that fully complies with the technical requirements could be used to indicate the last location to turn around.

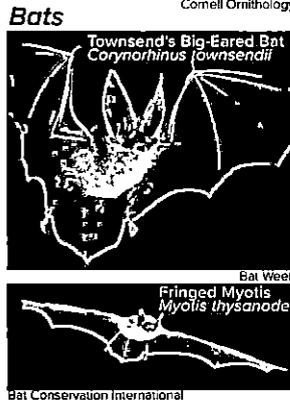
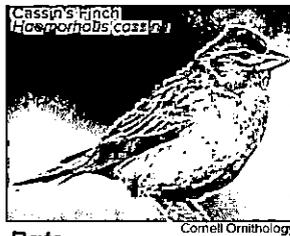
### ADA Rest Intervals

- Resting intervals are level areas that provide an opportunity for people to rest before continuing along an ORAR. Resting intervals are required at the top and bottom of a path section any time the running slope exceeds 1:20 (5%).

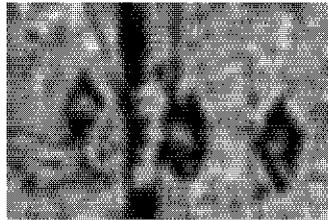
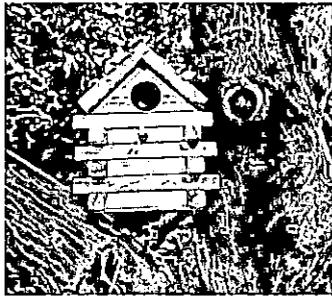


# PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES: ONGOING ECOLOGICAL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

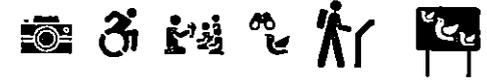
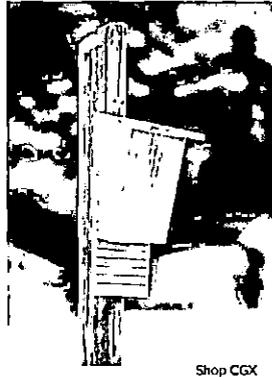
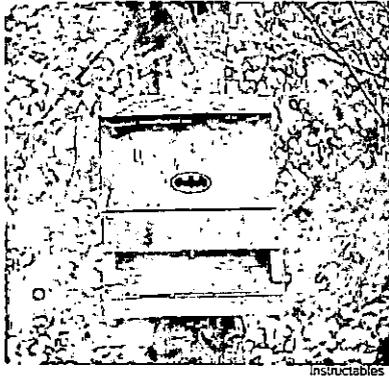
## Birds



Signs and installed structures and features imbue additional meaning on the outdoor experience. Signage can answer the question of "what kind of bird did I just hear?" or "what type of rock is that?" or tell a visitor things they never thought to ask, like about the breadth and diversity of plant life and what it means. Some meaningful engagement activities are outlined here.

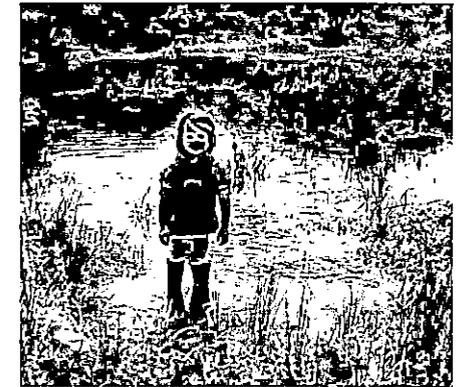


The richness in native pollinators, combined with the present lack of on-site programming, offer an impressive opportunity for pollinator education. Constructing and siting bird and bat houses could engage the community and establish senses of identity and pride. Similarly, the wetland habitat, which supports many birds, can serve as an interactive exhibit for education.



## Wetlands & Vegetation

Use signage and programming to promote wetland education while engaging the community to design, plant, and maintain, demonstration garden exhibits of native flora.

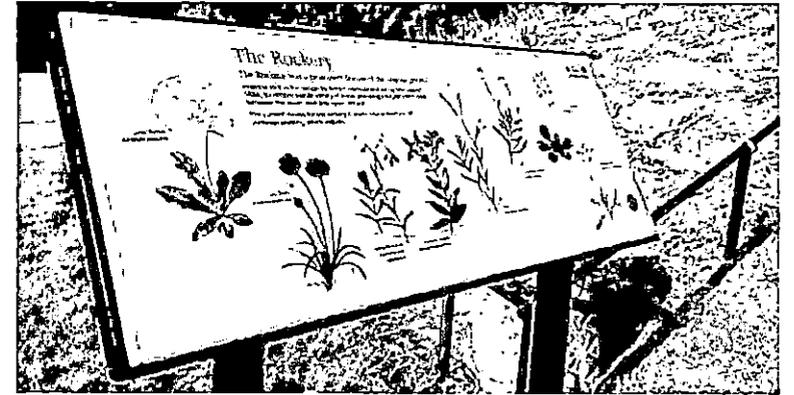
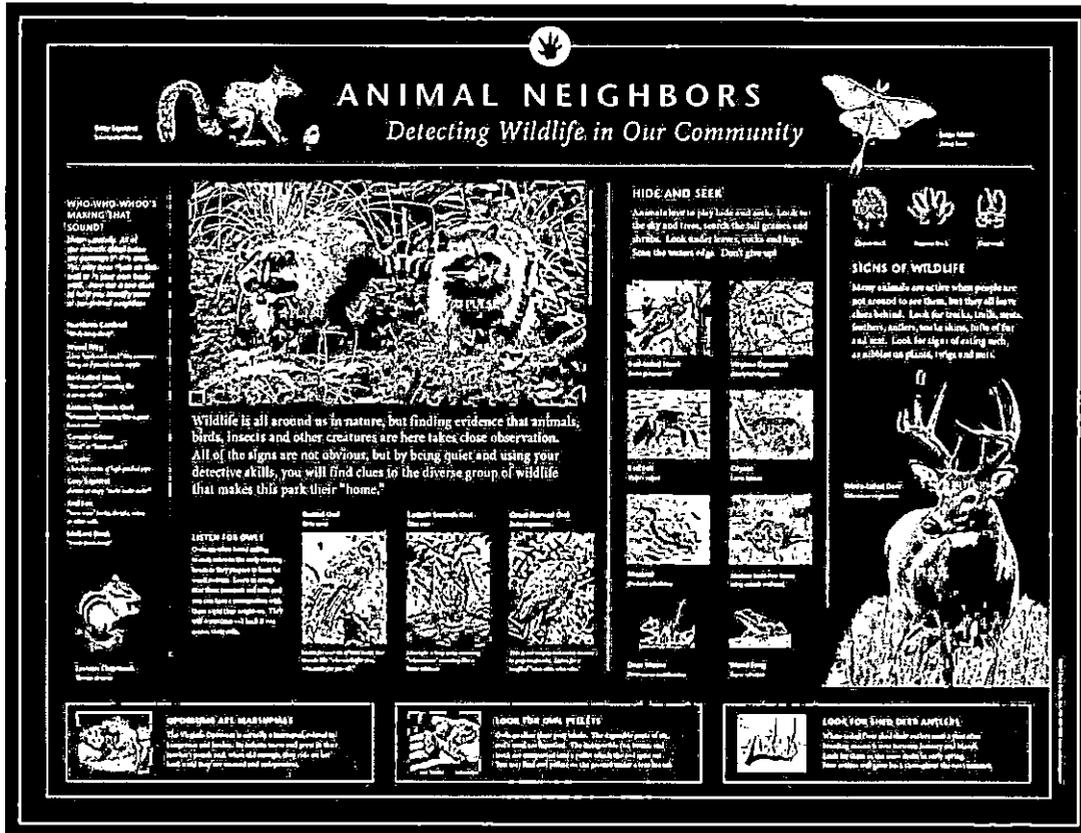




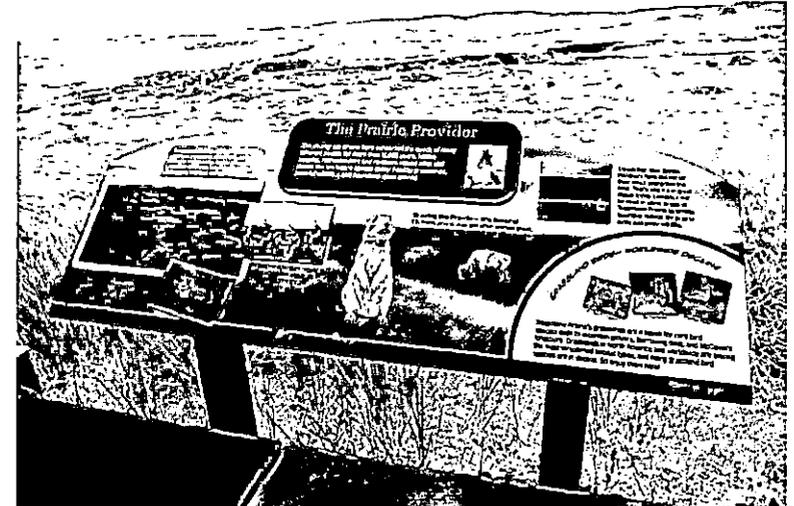
# PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES: EDUCATIONAL SIGNAGE



Educational/Interpretive signage should be inclusive — not just for the visitors, but also for the ecosystem. Signage should be a tool to educate people on the complex interspecies relationship that impact wider-scale ecological health. Broadening visitors' understanding of natural spaces inspires them to protect and preserve it as well enjoy it.



Signage could emphasize assemblies of vegetation on-site, including vibrant and charismatic perennials/re-seeders.



Signage could address interacting communities within the target ecosystem.

"PULSE DESIGN NATURE SERIES" Interpretive Trail Sign #040-2856-01C-14119, Size 28"x36", ©2019 Pulse Design, Inc. To Order: Call 708-385-1308 or Visit: [www.pulsedesign.com](http://www.pulsedesign.com)

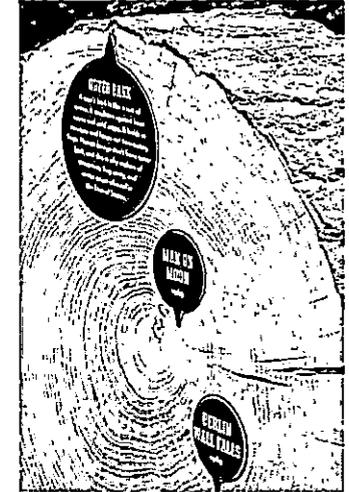
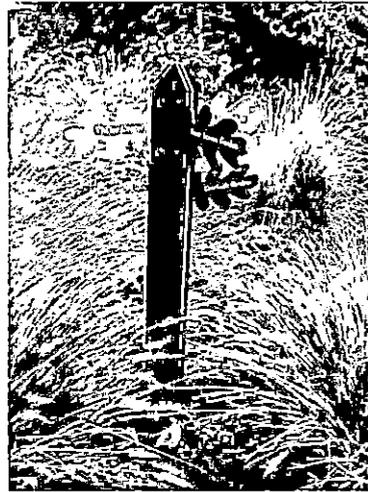
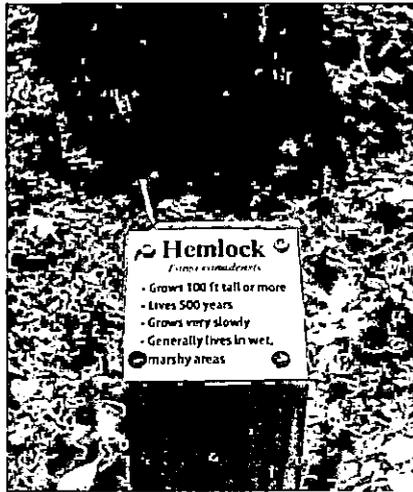


# PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES: INCLUSIVE & ACCESSIBLE SIGNAGE



## Simpler, Smaller, Wayfinding and Interpretive Signs

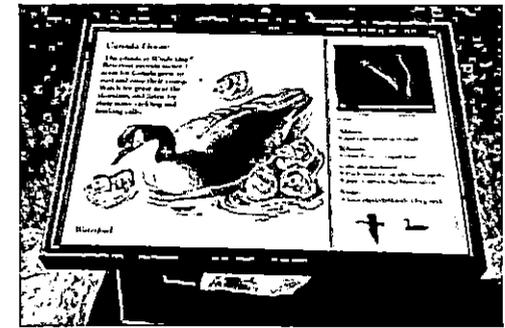
Complementarily, locally important organisms can be indicated with signage. Research shows that such exposure to such signage can promote conservation behaviors and a sense of place or identity (e.g. Davis and Thompson et al. 2011).



Relate site history and current events to endemic or site-specific features.



A silhouette or profile comparison chart for birds, or leaves, rodents, insects, etc., (particularly if raised, for tactile capabilities) engages all demographics. Such charts encourage spatial reasoning and memory recall, which caters to visitors of all ages and abilities.





# PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES: INCLUSIVE & ACCESSIBLE SIGNAGE

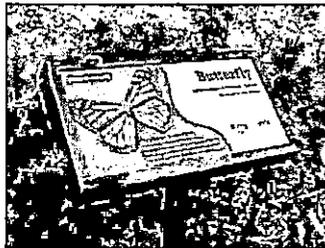
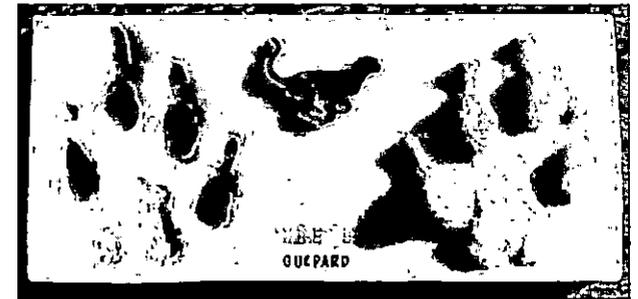
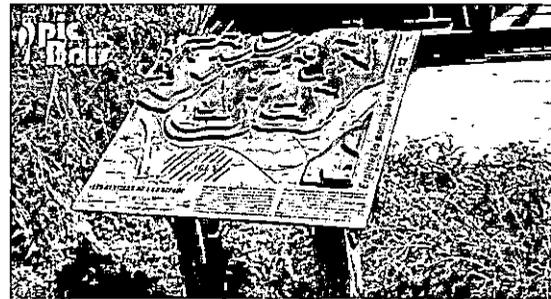
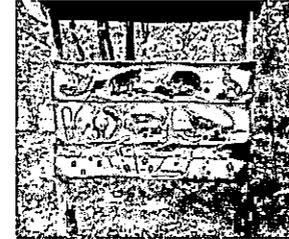
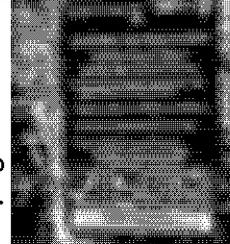


## Inclusive and Accessible Signage

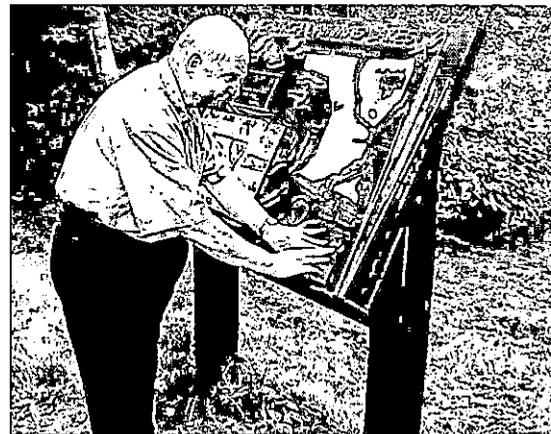
For signage to be Accessible, the following must be considered (USGBC):

- Height of signage
- Tactile elements (e.g. raised text, shapes, 3-D site plans, Braille)
- Strong contrast between color of text and background
- Directional signage with non-text diagrams/symbols and Braille or active visual or audio signaling on dynamic signs
- Continuous trail markers
- Patterns and color blocking to identify key spaces/destinations and to correspond with trails/trail names
- Clear wayfinding to ensure that emergency egress is inclusive

Simple "Natural Hazards Exist" warnings allow visitors to make their own assessments based on their own abilities. They do not use limiting language.



Pulse Designs, Inc uses single, individual-organism signage to include and educate those who communicate in ASL.



Like ASL graphics, tactile signage can be considered an accessibility measure, but it is an additional feature that all can enjoy.





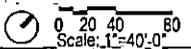
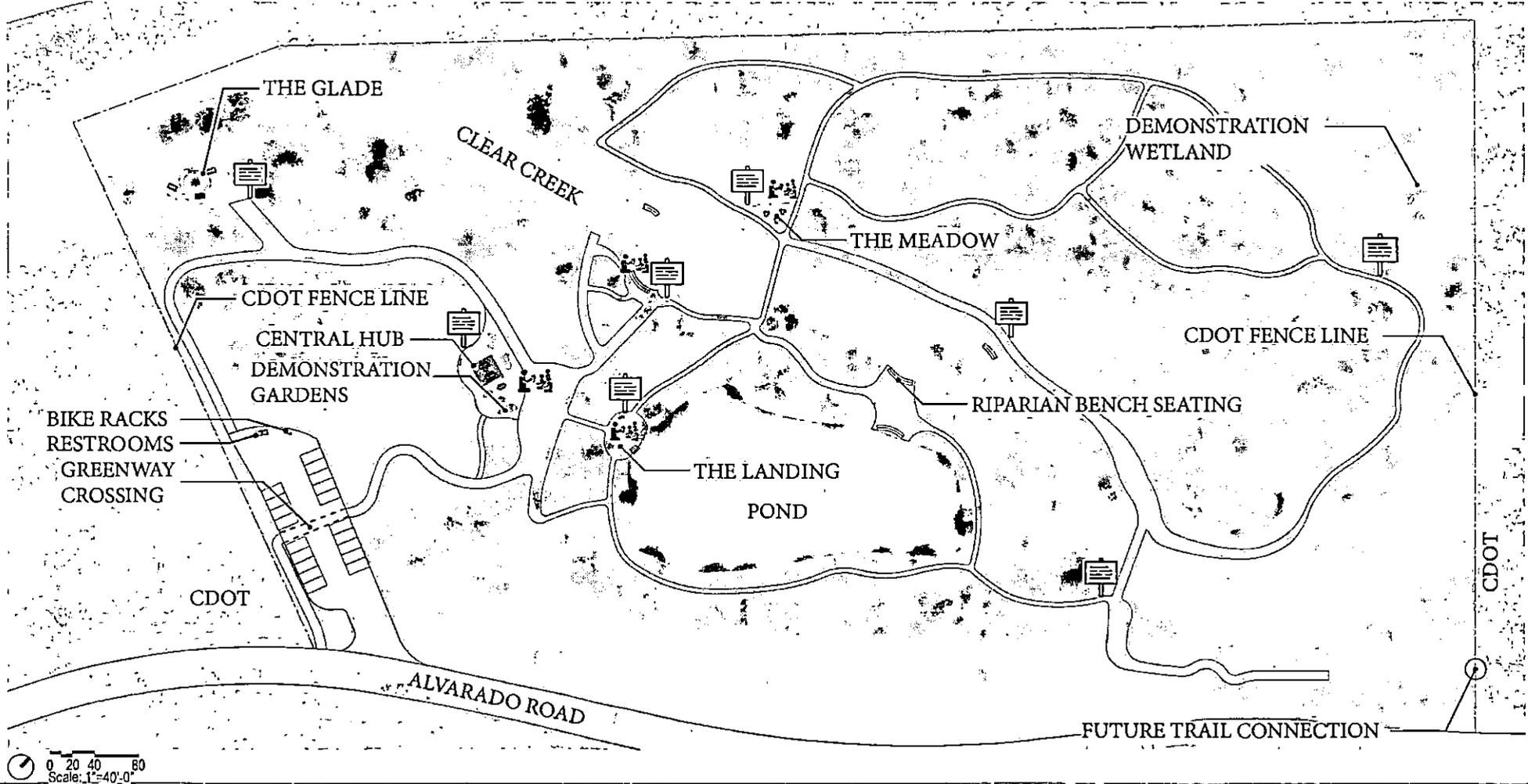


# CONCEPT #1: THE CENTRAL HUB

This concept focuses on providing a central hub left of the pond with other opportunities for rest, gathering, and education.

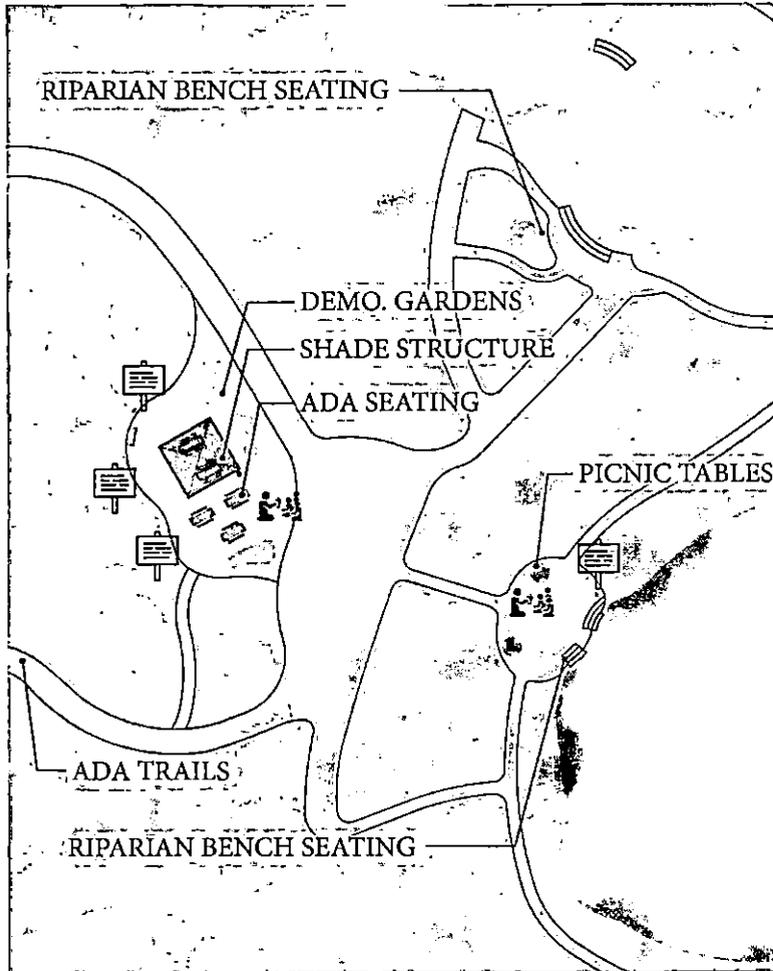
**LEGEND**

-  Interpretive Signage
-  Gathering Space





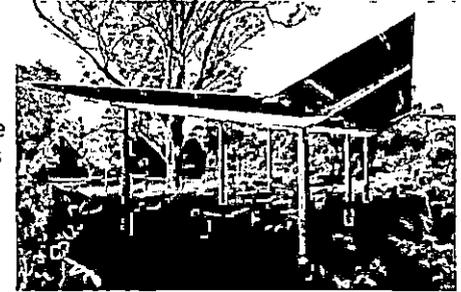
# CENTRAL HUB: HIGHLIGHTS



## THE CENTRAL HUB:

Here, there is a more formal gathering space in an open field adjacent to an existing building. This building will be removed, so by using this space, impact on the surrounding land will be minimized.

Centrally located, the shelter and seating provide views of main site features for wayfinding, as well as a space for smaller gatherings.



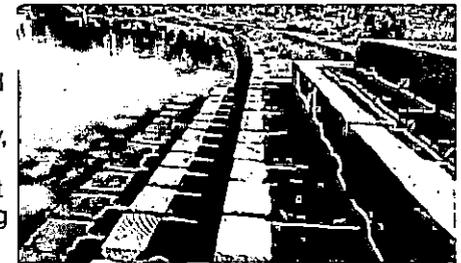
## Site Features:

- 20x20 shade structure
- ADA accessible seating
- Demonstration gardens
- Interpretive signage

Interpretive and wayfinding signage offers site-specific, hands-on educational opportunities.



By integrating seating into bank stabilization, users can access the pond and creek in a safe and inviting manner. Additionally, streamlining access at designated points will limit impacts on the surrounding site.



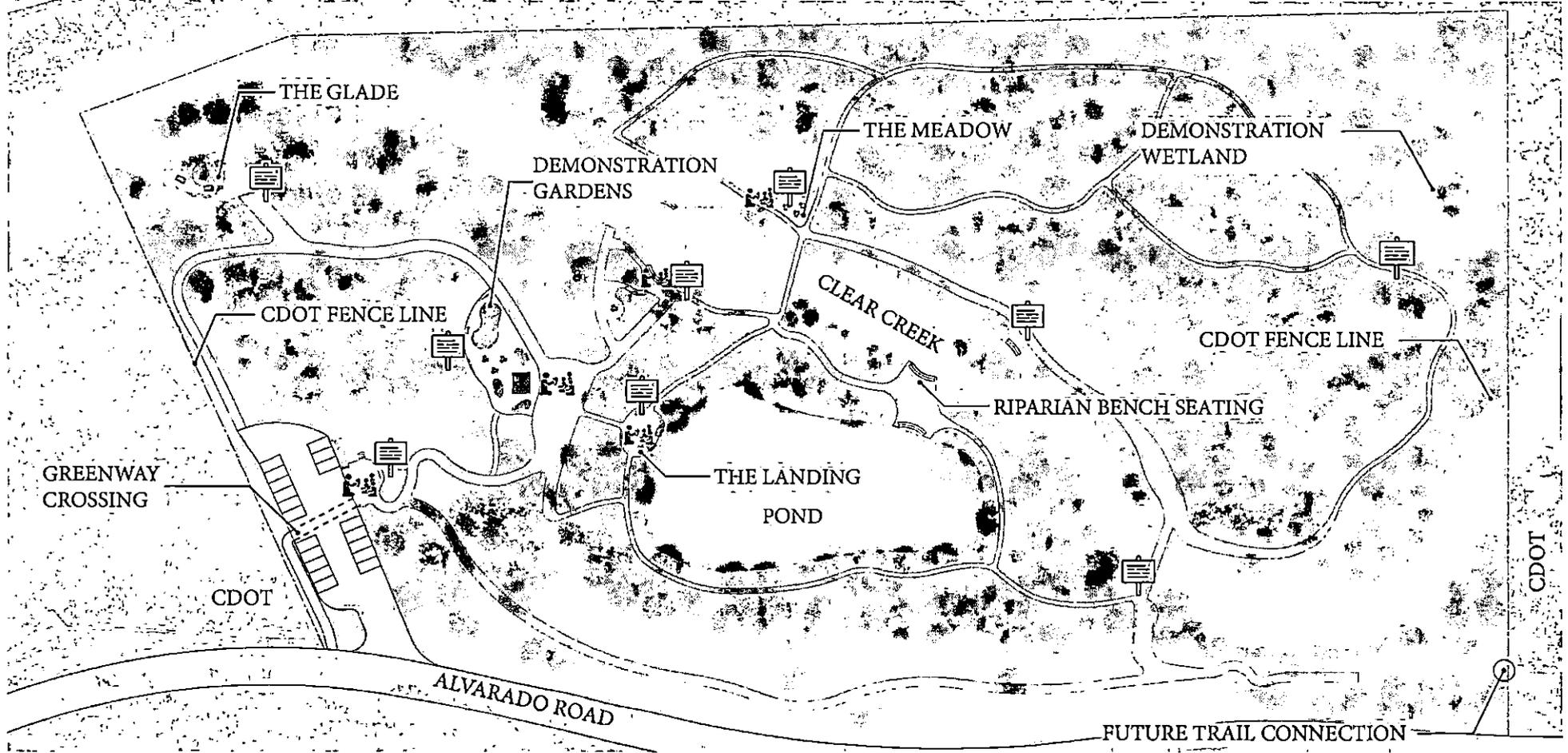


# CONCEPT #2: BOTANIC EXPERIENCE

This concept focuses on providing opportunities to interact with local flora. Involving local organizations in plant selection and care will enhance community stewardship and sense of identity.

## LEGEND

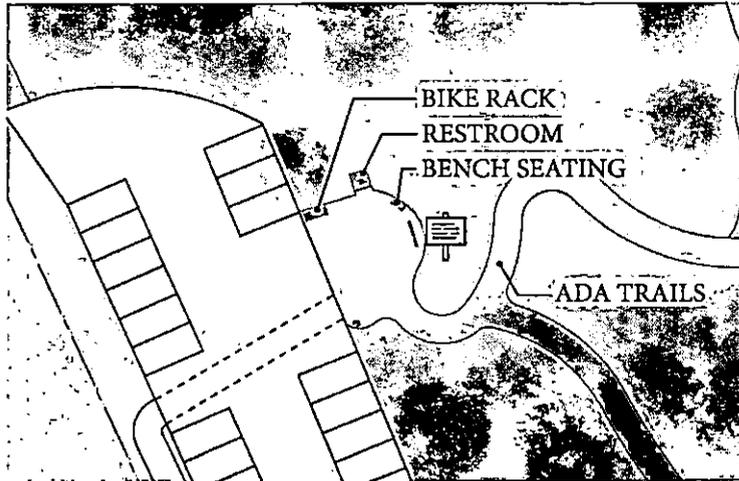
-  Interpretive Signage
-  Gathering Space



0 20 40 60  
Scale: 1"=40'-0"



# BOTANIC EXPERIENCE: HIGHLIGHTS

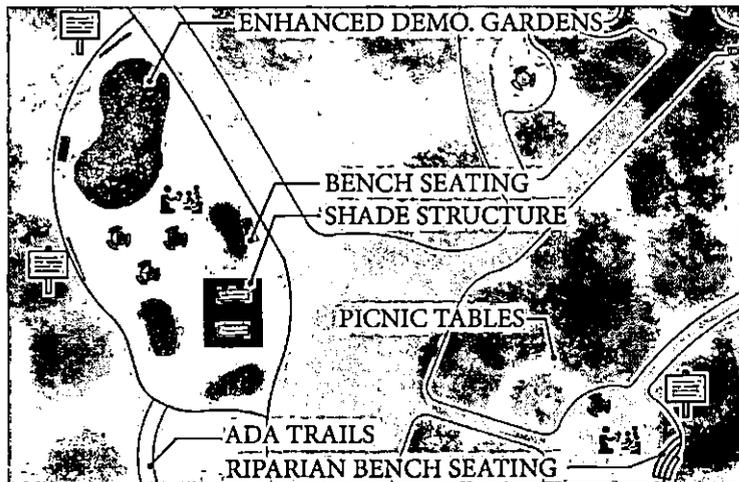


Scale: N.T.S

## GATHERING SPACE

Adjacent to the parking lot, this gathering spot can be accessed by people of all abilities as well as those who may only want to visit the site for a shorter time period. With a view of The Landing as well as The Demonstration Garden, this landmark invites users into the Alvarado Open Space Park experience.

The furnishings on site may be existing, standard (right), or custom products. Selecting furnishings that meet ADA standards is paramount.



Scale: N.T.S

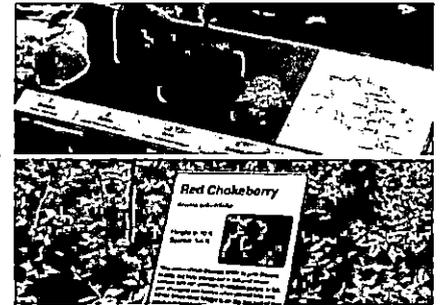
## THE DEMONSTRATION GARDENS

The garden educates visitors on native and endemic flora and fauna. Teaming up with local botanists, gardening clubs, bird watchers, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the garden showcases local biodiversity. Boosted by interactive educational signage and programming this garden can appeal to visitors of all ages and identities.

Demonstration gardens and trial gardens (right), educate visitors on local ecology, fomenting conservation-oriented behaviors.



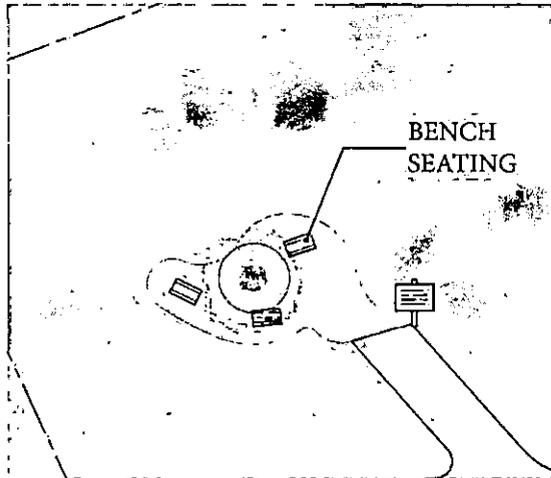
Interactive signage will highlight locally significant or intriguing flora and fauna, geology, hydrology, microbial ecology, and the connections between ecosystems.





# SHARED ENHANCEMENTS

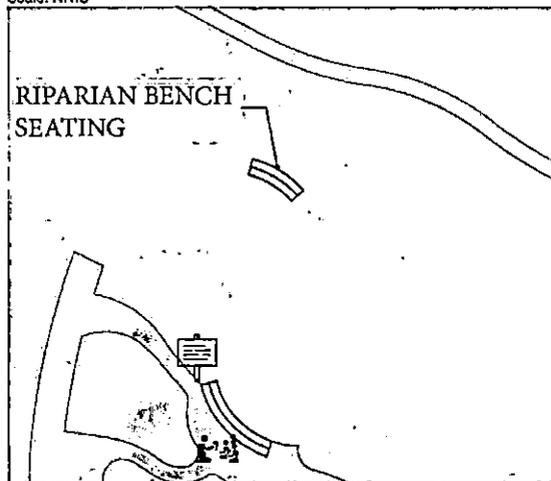
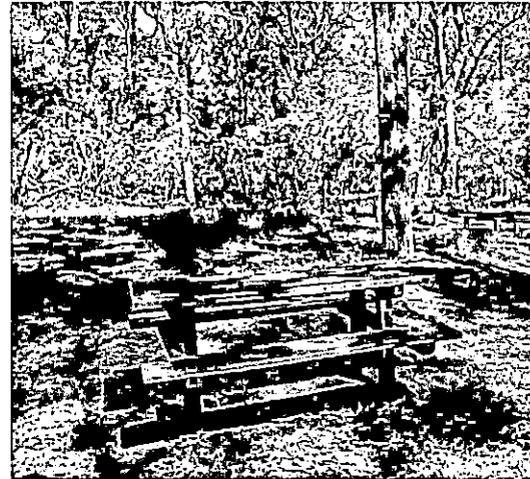
These shared enhancements are echoed through both concepts. The primary updates focus on smaller modifications throughout the site related to safety, restoration, education, and accessibility for all.



Scale: N.T.S

## THE GLADE

This portion of the site lies next to the river on the existing caretakers' house which currently poses a health risk and is set to be demolished. Repurposing this space creates enclosed gathering opportunities, centralizing disruptions to minimize impact on the surrounding space.



Scale: N.T.S

## THE CREEK

Both concepts utilize the current unofficial entry points to the creek around the site, and permit safe and inclusive access for all users. The Creek offers additional opportunities for education on hydrology, geology, history, and ecology.

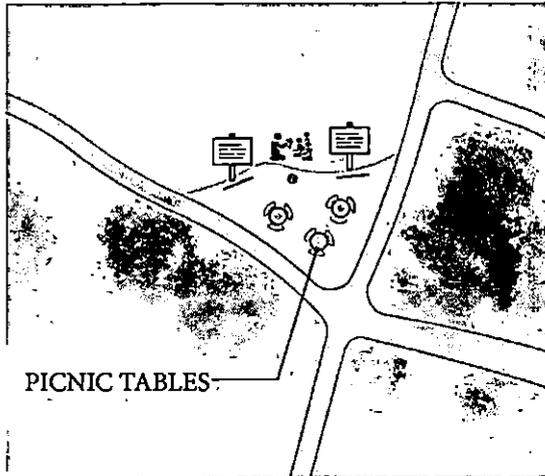




# SHARED ENHANCEMENTS

## SHARED ENHANCEMENTS

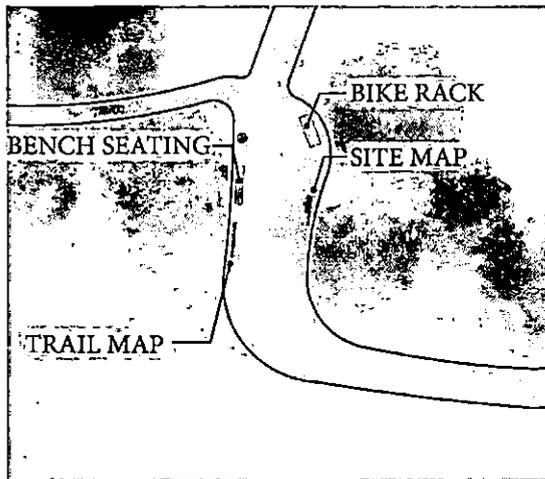
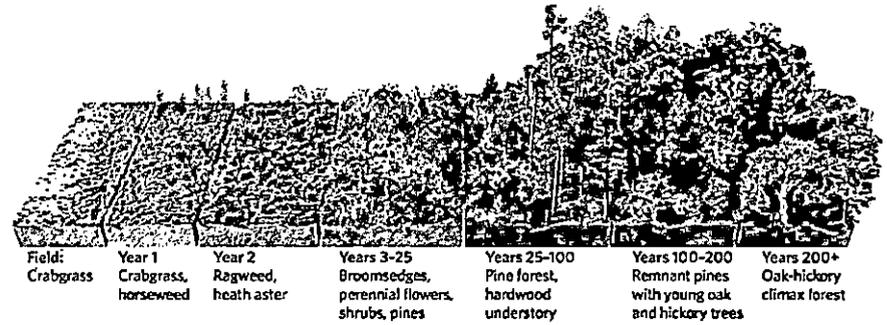
These shared enhancements are echoed through both concepts. The primary updates focus on smaller modifications throughout the site related to safety, restoration, education, and accessibility for all.



PICNIC TABLES

### THE MEADOW

The Meadow's open field offers views of the encompassing forest and as such, an opportunity to educate park-goers on plant succession, ecotones, and patch end edge effects (etc.). This location also serves as a visible node on the adjacent side of the creek from the primary gathering spots.



BENCH SEATING

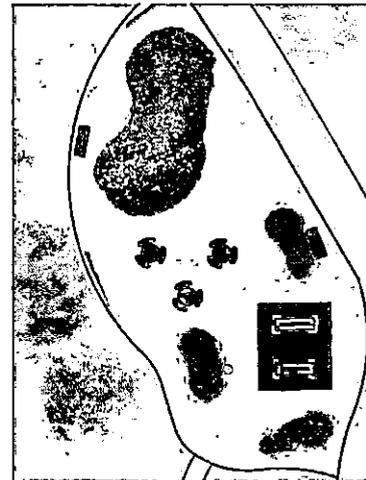
BIKE RACK

SITE MAP

TRAIL MAP

### FUTURE GREENWAY TRAIL EXPANSION

This expansion acts a transition between the Greenway Trail and Alvarado Open Space Park. Future plans to incorporate the trail expansion along the adjacent parcels and within Alvarado Open Space Park require forethought.



### DEMONSTRATION GARDENS

The demonstration gardens can be utilized by local organizations and the general community to provide education on local flora.

These Gardens can also be beneficial in understanding the changes that occur over time on the site as it pertains to climate, soil health, and local hydrology due too its proximity to the creek.



# CONCEPT COMPARISON

	<b>CENTRAL HUB</b>	<b>BOTANIC EXPERIENCE</b>
<b>Community Benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Larger gathering space</li><li>• More educational event opportunities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emphasis on natural space</li><li>• Smaller central gathering space</li></ul>
<b>Ecological Impacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Utilizes only an existing grass field adjacent to the pond</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Utilizes the existing grass field in conjunction with the space from the demolished cabin</li></ul>
<b>Physical Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Employs only natural and established clearings</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gathering space and educational experiences encroach into land adjacent to parking lot</li></ul>
<b>Cost (\$)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Slightly higher amenity cost due to larger shade structure</li><li>• Slightly lower earthwork cost due to reduced gathering space and garden space</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Slightly lower amenity cost due to smaller shade structure</li><li>• Slightly higher earthwork cost due to increased gathering space and garden space</li></ul>
<b>Gathering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community gathering spaces revolve around more freedom for individualized programming</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community gathering space is structured around ecological education opportunities</li></ul>



# PART III: RESOURCES & RECOMMENDATIONS

The final part of this Planning Process is for the Consultant team to offer Clear Creek County recommendations and resources, including cost estimates for both the design concepts, recommendations for how to manage this park and prioritize resources if phasing or resources constraints arise, and how to identify phasing opportunities to potential grantor's in the most strategic way possible.

## PART III: FORMULATE THE PLAN

### PART I: ESTABLISH CONTEXT

#### 1. SITE ANALYSIS & CONTEXT

Site Visits, Existing Conditions Observations  
GIS analysis  
Archive Research  
Ecological Assessments

#### 2. ENGAGE THE PUBLIC

Stakeholders, members of the public: Eye on Alvarado  
Stakeholders, County Officials: BOCC and OSC  
Stakeholders, all: On-Site Field Day

#### 3. ESTABLISH A VISION

What the Park will be

Community Feedback & Survey Responses  
Ecological & Environmental Conditions & Constraints  
Site Opportunities

#### 4. DISTILL OBJECTIVES

What the Plan project will do

#### 5. IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FROM CHALLENGES AND STRENGTHS

#### 6. DESIGN SITE IMPROVEMENT CONCEPTS

## PART III: RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOURCES

### 7. CONSULTANT RECOMMENDATIONS



# COST ESTIMATES

## Shared Enhancements

Shared enhancements are included through both cost estimates. Cost estimates do not include tasks deemed completable by the County Trails Crew.

## CONCEPT 1: THE HUB



## CONCEPT 2: BOTANIC



Price for General Condition Items:	\$ 56,000.00
Price for Erosion Control Items:	\$ 14,504.00
Price for Earthwork Items:	\$ 43,366.00
Price for Hardscape Items:	\$ 12,575.00
Price for Landscape Items:	\$ 10,108.00
Price for Site Amenity Items:	\$ 113,220.00

\$ 299,727.60

Price for General Condition Items:	\$ 56,000.00
Price for Erosion Control Items:	\$ 14,504.00
Price for Earthwork Items:	\$ 49,362.00
Price for Hardscape Items:	\$ 13,482.50
Price for Landscape Items:	\$ 10,108.00
Price for Site Amenity Items:	\$ 100,620.00

\$ 292,891.80

### Cost Summary

Concept 1 has a higher price point due to the increased size of the shade structure. Concept 2's price is slightly lower. While the shade structure in Concept 2 is a smaller size, it does require additional earthwork that the first Concept does not because of where it is situated specifically.

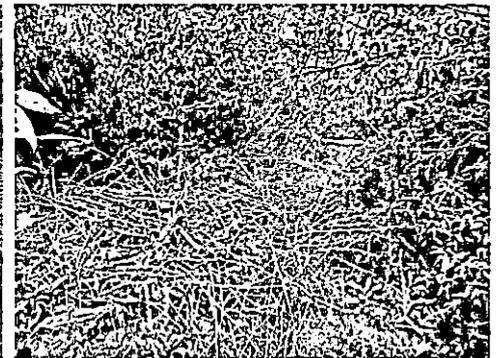
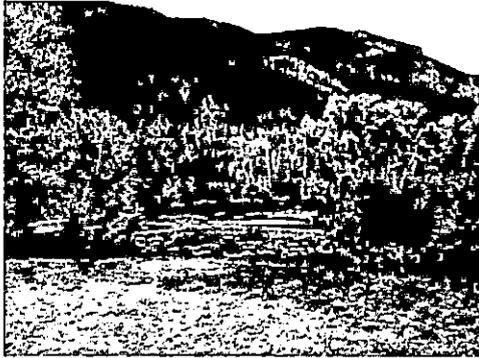


# CONSULTANT RECOMMENDATIONS: MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

## Recommended Priorities

If this project had to be phased, or were to be self-funded, the Consultant Team recommends prioritizing the following project elements:

- Educational signage - install and check monthly to ensure structural integrity and general wear.
- Demonstration Gardens - Collaborate with local partners to schedule planting, regular care and maintenance, pruning, disease and pest assessments, etc.
- Creek bank - monitor changes in depth, width, and hydrology, potentially partnering with educators and/or government to involve students.
- Picnic tables - assess structural integrity yearly, replacing components when/where necessary.
- Bathrooms - clean and restock at least once a week, avoiding paper towels to reduce waste and litter.
- Shade structures - assess structural integrity annually, and/or after major wind or snow events, repairing when/where necessary.



If only Annual Maintenance were possible in a given year, the Consultant Team recommends prioritizing the following tasks:

- Bridges - assess bridge abutments for soil erosion semi annually.
- Dead wood - Arborist pruning and removal/re-purpose (logs as low maintenance benches/seating) every 8-12 months.
- Invasive and/or nuisance species (e.g. *Clematis*, *Phragmites*) - trail crews can conduct visual inspections on site monthly.
- Trash - weekly sweep of entire Park.



# RECOMMENDED PHASING PRIORITIES

Recognizing that not all of THK's conceptual suggestions can be constructed or implemented immediately or even simultaneously, we offer suggestions for how to phase them, which holistically considers both relative ease of implementation (e.g. how much current activities and visitors would be disrupted) and cost of implementation (e.g. less vs. more expensive). On the subsequent page, we further contextualize the phasing priorities.

## *Short Term Improvements:*

### Safety

On site safety for all users is a critical improvement to be made as soon as possible, to avoid injuries and ensure inclusion of all interested participants.

### Creek Access

Designating creek access in particular zones augments visitor safety and interaction while protecting the creek banks, and their delicate ecologies, from further erosion.

### ADA Access

ADA access across the site is paramount to providing equal and high quality experiences for all to enjoy Alvarado Open Space Park.

## *Mid Term Improvements:*

### Restoration

Restoration of the Creek, pond, and the road shoulders, as well as narrowing trails that have become excessively wide, are the primary focus. These create consistent, nature-filled experience for users while enhancing the ecosystem.

### Signage

Both safety and educational signage can be paradigm-shifting in terms of inspiring a sense of pride and inclusion. They become necessary as more diverse groups – especially educational ones – utilize the site.

### Amenities

Additional gathering areas, dog waste stations, and trash receptacles help to mitigate trash and human impact on the surrounding ecosystems, ensuring a pleasant experience for all species who visit.

## *Long Term Improvements:*

### Bridge Replacement

The on-site bridges support a unique, groomed, and scenic experience. Broadening their capacity to include a wider variety of park visitors is crucial for inclusivity. Because the Open Space is already relatively flat, there is already great impetus to support the 'accessible' terrain with accessible bridges.

### Structures

Shade and gathering structures offer shelter and physical space for people to relax or socialize, either alone or socially. They serve as sources of comfort that may appeal to a more diverse crowd.

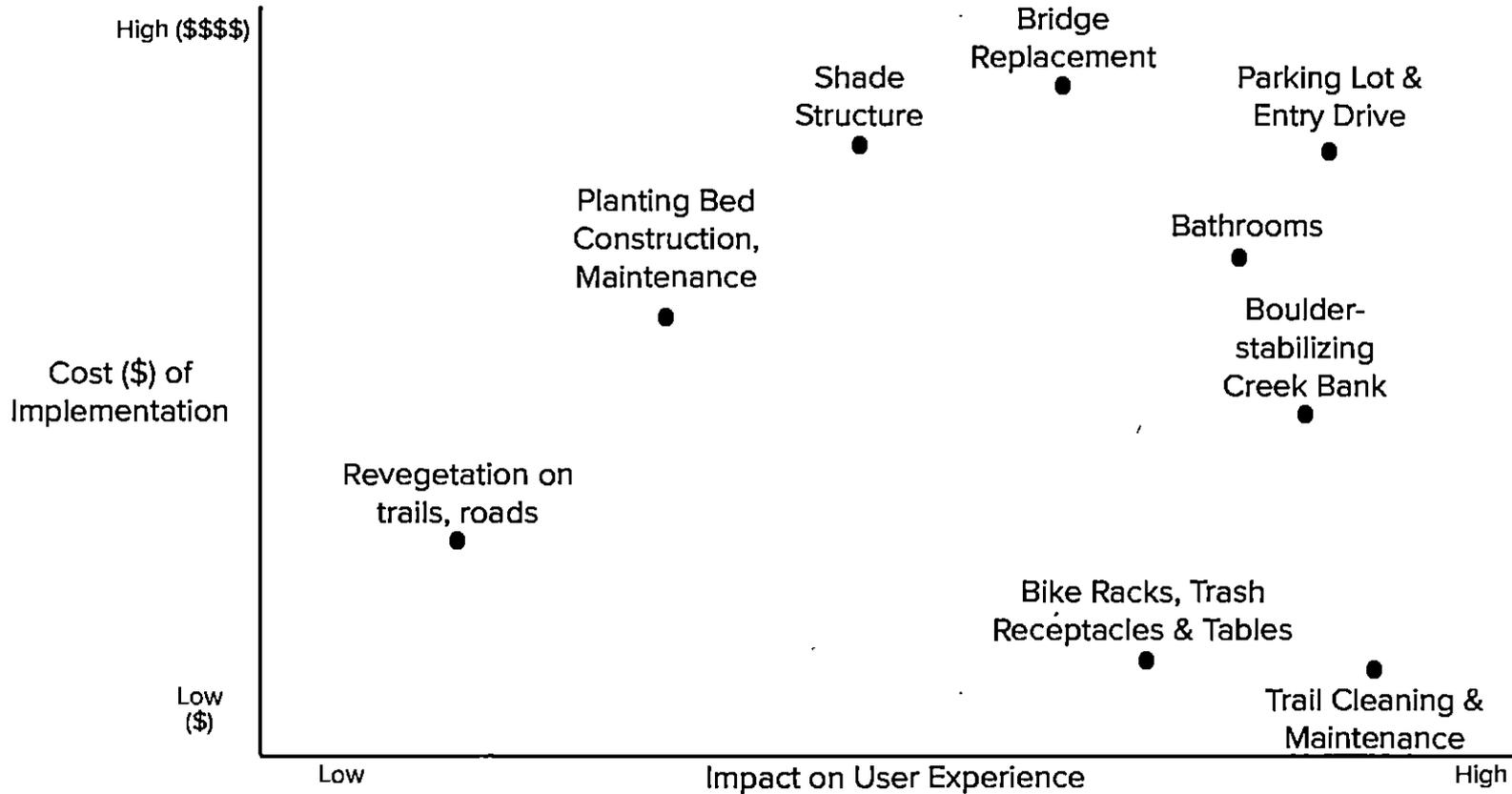
### Formal Programming

Aligning with educational signage goals, and partnering with educational groups and curricula, formal programming could solidify Alvarado as a landmark for experiential education.



# RECOMMENDED PHASING PRIORITIES

Weighing two factors for each amenity or site change can be a useful approach when budget, time, and/or capacity is limited. These two factors are: 1. costs of implementation, 2. impact on user experience.





# RECOMMENDED CONCEPT



Considering budget, phasing of implementation, functionality, and interests, THK recommends selecting **The Botanic Experience**.

The Botanic Experience concept transforms Alvarado Open Space Park into a balanced model for utilitarianism, conservation, and education, facilitated by impactful enhancements that require minimal disruption to existing land and activities.

Educational programming, embedded in educational signage, creates opportunities to collaborate with local schools and organizations to introduce nature-based learning into a curriculum. When partnered with community botany or ecology organizations, the demonstration gardens offer community engagement through vegetation species selection and care. The relative accessibility of the park opens doors for visitors who may not have ADA access or guided learning at other similar sites.

Alvarado Open Space Park's compact size establishes it as a prime destination for smaller groups, who typically spend about an hour exploring the site, according to Eye on Alvarado. Small groups can traverse trails and circle the pond for walks, lunch, or just to enjoy the scenery and its mental and physical health benefits.

The estimated total cost of this concept is not only lower than that of the Central Hub Concept, but it also centers experiential interaction more prominently than this alternative. The Eye on Alvarado Survey and subsequent engagement conversations highlight interaction as a key goal for on-site improvements. To save further on expenses, reducing parking spots in the lot adjacent to gathering area could be considered.

Opportunities for local community engagement and investment are abundant in The Botanic Experience. Cherishing local resources and augmenting Alvarado Open Space Park as a local, accessible, treasure is the overarching aim of both concepts. Ultimately, the Botanic Experience provides small, low cost enhancements that more readily and holistically meet the desires of Clear Creek residents.

